

DECEMBER 3, 2007

The American Conservative

Walt, Mearsheimer,
& the Lobby



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THE GOOD HITCHENS

Peter Hitchens's account of his recent trip to North Korea (Nov. 19) was a revelation, not only for its sage and penetrating analysis of this alleged threat to the free world but also for its intensely moving snapshot of a people caught in the death throes of a dissolving Communist state.

I have read this article three times and am completely mesmerized by the power of Hitchens's writing. He has the eye of a reporter and the soul of a poet. Hope to see many more articles by him in the future!

JULIE COLLORAFI

Long Island, N.Y.

DWELL ON DIFFERENCE

The Fourteen Days item in the Nov. 19 issue entitled "Political Science"—which states that "Americans have perfectly good moral and societal reasons not to dwell on the racial distribution of intelligence," and goes on to approvingly quote Nathan Glazer's comment that untruth on the subject is better for us than the truth—amounts to obscurantism. Would we also be better off not to "dwell" on the racial distribution of crimes of violence and other racial group differences? I'm used to such statements being made by the government and academics but not by your magazine.

DAVID VINCELETTE

Duanesburg, N.Y.

MARKET STRENGTH

In his rollicking review of John Gray's *Black Mass: Apocalyptic Religion and The Death of Utopia* (Nov. 19), R.J. Stove opined that Michael Oakeshott's statement regarding F.A. Hayek's philosophy—"A plan to resist all planning may be better than its opposite, but it belongs to the same school of politics"—was famous but not famous enough. But the statement has gotten the lack of attention it deserves. Oakeshott was smarter than that—or he should have been.

Ludwig von Mises made a distinction that Oakeshott and Stove overlook: the difference is not between "plan" and "no plan," but is a matter of "who plans." Does the government plan for everyone or does each individual plan for himself?

As for Gray's view of Hayek's work—"Reinventing the market meant curbing spontaneously evolved institutions such as trade unions and monopolistic corporations. This could be done only be a highly centralized state"—let's look closer. Ever burgeoning governments whose leaders derive their powers through mass democracy have shown little desire to curb such institutions. Instead, government boosts its overall power by pitting its institutions and other collectives against each other. This strengthens the whole notion of essential collectivism.

Only an increase in the number of honest individuals, with enough spiritual capital to recognize and act upon the shame of trying to game the system for their special interest, can bring back the market.

JAMES MOSHER

Ledyard, Conn.

GO BEARS!

Pat Buchanan's commentary on global warming (Nov. 19) offers more rhetorical smoke than real illumination. It's easy for those living with a full belly to dismiss reports of melting ice caps, population growth, and world hunger as "alarmist." But the specter of human population pressure exceeding our natural resource base isn't some Malthusian forecast; it is already happening. Nearly 1 billion people suffer the daily hell of hunger and malnutrition. And if adding an extra 100 million people a year to the world population doesn't alarm us, it should.

Buchanan trumpets the abundance of food here in the U.S. He should know our current levels of food production depend heavily on oil. Beyond running tractors and shipping food to distant markets, fossil fuels are used to make

the fertilizer, pesticides, and herbicides our hybrid crops require. In Western states, underground aquifers are being drawn down at unsustainable rates. Topsoil that once measured three feet deep in our breadbasket prairie states now measures a foot or less on many farms.

Among other blithe assertions, Buchanan cites increasing numbers of polar bears on land as an indication that a little ice cap melting is fine. Perhaps he could learn something from biologists and native hunters about ecosystems and long-term thinking. If polar bears lose the sea ice and the ability to hunt seals, thus increasing numbers of hungry bears on shore. Does Buchanan really suppose this is good for humans or bears?

Scientists like Jared Diamond believe we have perhaps a 30-year window to avert disaster. While other scientists might disagree about the exact shape and time of that window, nearly all concur that the wheels we are currently setting in motion will have profound consequences.

Rather than arguing if sea levels are going to rise three feet or 20, we should realize that for a country like Bangladesh, any rise is a disaster. Rather than quibbling about the exact number of degrees celsius, the real story is that the world's coral reefs are already in serious decline, as are maple trees in New England, permafrost on the northern tundras, and arable topsoil worldwide. Both floods and drought are increasing in severity. This isn't fearmongering, it's reality. The sooner we recognize we all live downstream, the better.

STEVE SCHUCH

Hillsborough, N.H.

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[GOP]

WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE

The Bush presidency has provided much to contemplate regarding presidential character and the pitfalls of cronyism. The course of Rudy Giuliani's campaign over the next several months should reveal what Republicans have learned.

The character question surfaces because of Bernie Kerik, who played a starring role in Giuliani's mayoralty as the driver Rudy elevated to police commissioner and eventually recommended to lead the Department of Homeland Security. But Kerik didn't get far in the background checks. It appears he is a thief with ties to organized crime. All of this will be explored when he stands trial on multiple federal counts of fraud and conspiracy. It's not simply a matter of Giuliani making a poor character judgment, of failing to see what lay beneath Kerik's gruff façade. As mayor, Giuliani was explicitly briefed on Kerik's ties to a company linked to organized crime, but he blew off the warnings and appointed him anyway.

Nor is Kerik an outlier in the otherwise morally upstanding Giuliani universe. Two years ago, Russell Harding, Rudy's city housing commissioner, was sentenced to five years in prison for theft and possession of child pornography. Then there is Alan Placa, a childhood friend who became a priest. It was he who got Giuliani an annulment of his 14-year marriage to his first wife—on the grounds that she was his cousin—so he could marry again. Placa was suspended from his diocese duties in 2002 after a Suffolk County grand jury accused him of sexually abusing children and helping cover up sexual abuse by other priests. The district attorney concluded that the statute of limitations had expired on the crimes, which included rape, sodomy, and the use of children in a sexual performance. After Placa's suspension, he was hired by Giuliani Partners, where he

remains employed. He denies the charges, and Giuliani has stood by his friend. The defense would be more persuasive if Rudy's record of choosing associates was more impressive.

[ENDORSEMENTS]

CARELESS SHEPHERDS

Unable to pick one candidate in the Republican primary, social conservatives are endorsing all of them. Sam Brownback, who recently quit his campaign as the "only authentic social conservative" has endorsed John McCain. Paul Weyrich chose the recently pro-life Mitt Romney. The American Family Association's Donald Wildmon supports Baptist minister Mike Huckabee. And the ailing Thompson campaign nabbed the endorsement of the National Right to Life Committee despite the actor's inability to tell Tim Russert whether he would like to see abortion criminalized, only managing to croak his belief that the sanctity of life is a state issue.

And apparently some candidates don't even need to pander to get a headline-grabbing endorsement. During his hosanna to Rudy Giuliani, Pat Robertson praised the pro-choice, thrice-married mayor as "a committed Catholic." Though many downplay Robertson's influence, his popular television show "The 700 Club" reaches millions each week. The mayor can rest assured that Robertson's broadcast won't emphasize his stance in favor of civil unions—a fact that 64 percent of Republicans, according to Gallup, simply don't know.

This lack of unity (and integrity in Robertson's case) will guarantee that

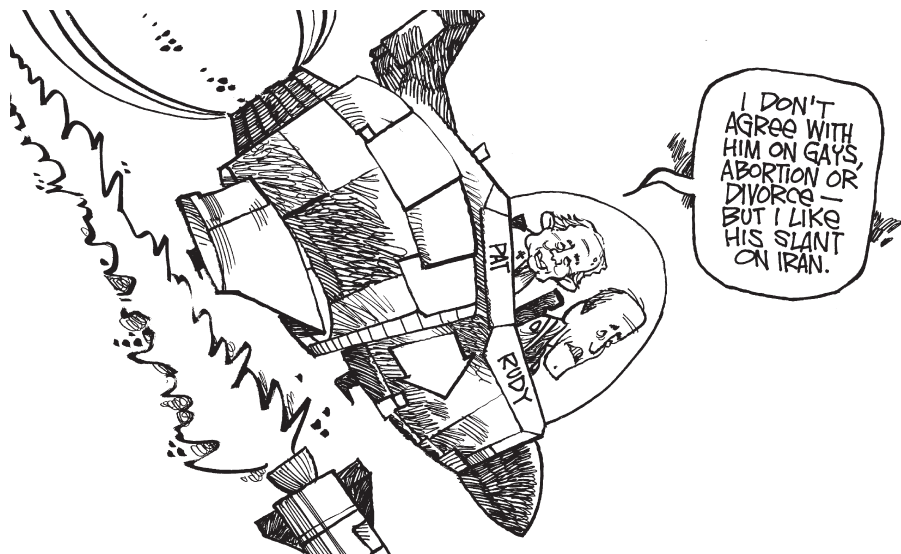
values voters are again in the backseat of the Republican Party. The psalmist says, "Put not your trust in princes." After this primary season, social conservatives may extend that counsel to include the pastors who claim to lead them.

[PROTEST]

WHO'S AFRAID OF RON PAUL?

Reason's Dave Wiegel made the good point in covering the impressively large Ron Paul rally in Philadelphia. It had drawn as many detractors as show up at the top-tier Hillary/McGuilromney events. No one would bother to compile negative propaganda against Paul if he was seen as a marginal crank. The same thing happened on the "Glenn Beck" show, where the pundit went on as if Paul's success in raising an unprecedented \$4.2 million in one day was some kind of threat to the Republic. Likewise on *The New Republic* blogsite, where one of Marty Peretz's minions devotes himself to concocting "Ron Paul is a devil" posts.

Something is going on. Paul has tapped into a youthful rebellious energy utterly absent from the other GOP campaigns and hardly present among the Democrats. It isn't Right or Left. It's undisciplined. It has its own fringes, which make claims that will never resonate in American politics. But Paul—long a respected figure among libertarians and non-interventionist conservatives—has managed something few expected: he has caught on as the protest candidate, the "speak truth to power" candidate, the combination Jesse Jackson/Pat Buchanan candidate, the candidate young people who have not



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been involved in politics are suddenly talking about.

He didn't have to do anything extraordinary to gain that status, for we live in odd times, where a willingness to respect the Constitution—to consult what it says about starting wars, for example—is unusual. It shouldn't be that way. But millions are grateful that at least one candidate isn't eager to bomb Iran or start a thousand new social programs. Ron Paul's lift-off has been the political surprise of the season—and a good one.

[PR]

HEY YA'LL DIPLOMACY

Unfurl that "Mission Accomplished" banner. "I feel that I have done what Secretary Rice and President Bush have asked of me by transforming public diplomacy," Karen Hughes said, announcing the culmination of her grand plan to repair America's image in the Muslim world.

Trouble is, the more we spent promoting the Freedom Agenda—\$900 million per year, double since Hughes took over—and the more she toured—Al Jazeera pronounced her the "marquee clown" in America's "circus diplomacy"—the less they liked us.

Part of the problem was Hughes herself. What better way to enforce stereotypes of American recklessness than to dispatch a brash Texas reporter with no diplomatic bona fides or regional expertise? "Let's say some Muslim leader wanted to improve Americans' image of Islam," Fred Kaplan wrote at *Slate*. "It's doubtful that he would send as his emissary a woman in a black chador who had spent no time in the United States, possessed no knowledge of our history or movies or pop music, and spoke no English beyond a heavily accented 'Good morning.'"

But the real obstacle wasn't our inept spokeswoman. No PR campaign, however brilliant, can sell a flawed product.

Hughes may have come to this realization. After repeatedly hearing that a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was key to restoring American standing, she told President Bush—to no avail. Everywhere she turned, Hughes faced questions she couldn't answer: torture, detention camps, when the Iraq occupation will end and the Iranian begin. Deputizing Michelle Kwan and hosting summer camps proved a pitiful antidote to administration intransigence.

So Ambassador Karen is declaring victory and going home. The truth is, she couldn't do her job. But until policy changes, no one can.

[WAR]

KNOW WHEN TO FOLD 'EM

The \$609 billion already appropriated for the Iraq War should give fiscal conservatives pause. Now double that. According to a new report released by the Democratic staff of Congress' Joint Economic Committee, the hidden costs of the war total \$1.2 trillion.

Some of the sleeper expenses seem obvious: higher oil prices, veterans' healthcare, interest payments on money borrowed to finance the war. Others are less apparent: economic disruptions caused by lengthy reservist deployments cost between \$1-2 billion.

Republicans dispute the report's findings, and indeed, much of the analysis is speculative. But American reliance on foreign debt is indisputable, as is the fact that legions of soldiers will require lifetimes of care.

At what point will we have sacrificed enough blood and treasure to pronounce the loss too great and pack our bags? On some perverse level, the price tag drives many to persist. The more we lose, the more dogged they become about winning at any cost. Even if the Democrats' calculations are airtight, Congressional Republicans can't afford to believe them. ■

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[walt & mearsheimer's slingshot]

The Lobby Strikes Back

A new book riles the AIPAC crowd, but makes it to the bestseller list anyway.

By Scott McConnell

ONE PRISM through which to gauge the impact of John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt's *The Israel Lobby and American Foreign Policy* is a September incident involving Barack Obama. His campaign had placed small ads in various spots around the Internet, designed to drive readers to its website. One turned up on Amazon's page for the Walt and Mearsheimer book. A vigilant watchdog at the *New York Sun* spotted it and contacted the campaign: Did Obama support Walt and Mearsheimer?

The answer came within hours. The ad was withdrawn. Its placement was "unintentional." The senator, his campaign made clear, understood that key arguments of the book were "wrong," but had definitely not read the work himself. In short, Walt and Mearsheimer had reached a pinnacle of notoriety.

Though *The Israel Lobby* was on the way to best-sellerdom and has become perhaps the most discussed policy book of the year, the presidential candidate touted as the most fresh-thinking and intellectually curious in the race hastened to make clear he had not been corrupted by the toxic text.

The episode illustrates one of the book's central arguments: the Israel lobby is powerful, and American politicians fear its wrath. Any Democrat running for president—drawing on a donor

stream that is heavily Jewish, very interested in Israel, and perceived as hawkish—would have reacted as Obama did.

In their book's introduction, Walt and Mearsheimer summarize the consequences of this power. In an election year, American politicians will differ radically on domestic issues, social issues, immigration, China, Darfur, and virtually any other topic. But all will "go to considerable lengths to express their deep personal commitment to one foreign country—Israel—as well as their determination to maintain unyielding support for the Jewish state." The authors find this remarkable and deserving of analysis, which they provided first in a paper, posted last year on Harvard's Kennedy School website and published in the *London Review of Books*, and now expanded into a book.

This is not the first time a prominent American has taken on the subject. George Ball, undersecretary of state in the Johnson and Kennedy administrations and the government official most prescient about Vietnam, a bona fide member of the Wall Street and Washington establishments, called for the recalibration of America's Israel policy in a much noted *Foreign Affairs* essay in 1977, and at the end of his life co-authored a book on the subject with his son. Eleven-term congressman Paul

Findley, defeated after a former AIPAC president called him "a dangerous enemy of Israel," wrote a book that became a bestseller, and there are others.

But no one with the combined skills and eminence of Walt and Mearsheimer has before addressed the subject systematically. These two are mandarins of American academia, having reached the top of a field that attracts smart people. They have tenure, job security, and professional autonomy most journalists lack. They have the institutional prestige of Harvard and the University of Chicago behind them. Most importantly, they bring first-rate skills of research, synthesis, and argument to their task.

One might wish that their book had been different in some ways—more literary, more discursive, more precise in some of its definitions, deeper in some areas, more (my favorite, from blogger Tony Karon) "dialectical." But *The Israel Lobby* is an extraordinary accomplishment, completed with great speed—a dense, factually based brief of an argument that is often made but rarely made well.

In public appearances discussing their book, Walt and Mearsheimer are tremendously effective: measured, facts at their fingertips, speaking with the fluency of men accustomed to addressing demanding audiences. Most of all, while treating a

subject where hyperbole is common, they are moderate. They are respectful of Israel, admiring of its accomplishments, and extremely aware that criticism of Israel or the Israel lobby can turn ugly and demagogic. As might be expected of top scholars in America, they are fully conscious of what Jews have suffered in the past and how much anti-Semitism has been a moral blot on the West as a whole. So while they have none of the excessive deference, guilt feelings, and reluctance to engage so typical of the remaining WASP elite, they are very well-modulated. Their detractors would have preferred loose-tongued adversaries, Palestinians whose words are raw with loss and resentment, a left wing anti-Zionist like Noam Chomsky, or genuine anti-Semites. Instead, with Walt and Mearsheimer, they are encountering something like the American establishment of a vanished era at its calm, patriotic best.

It is obvious that *The Israel Lobby*, both the article and the book, would be extremely unwelcome to those pleased with the status quo. Under the current arrangement, the United States gives Israel \$3-4 billion in aid and grants a year—about \$500 per Israeli and several orders of magnitude more than aid to citizens of any other country. Israel is the only American aid recipient not required to account for how the money is spent. Washington uses its Security Council veto to shield Israel from critical UN resolutions and periodically issues bland statements lamenting the continued expansion of Israeli settlements on the Palestinian land the Jewish state has occupied since 1967. When Israel violates U.S. law, as it did in Lebanon by using American-made cluster bombs against civilian targets, a low-level official may issue a mild complaint. These fundamentals of the relationship go unchallenged by 95 percent of American politicians holding or running for national office.

Walt and Mearsheimer's goal was to ignite a conversation about the lobby—which they define expansively as an amorphous array of individuals, think tanks, and congressional lobbying groups that advocate Israeli perspectives—and its consequences, which they believe are damaging to America's core strategic interests in the Middle East. They support Israel's existence as a Jewish state, and while they readily summarize Israeli blemishes, drawing on Israeli sources and the arguments of the country's revisionist "new historians," they are fully aware that no modern state has been built without injustices. They seek a more normal United States relationship with Israel, rather like we have with France or Spain, and an Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement that can start to drain the poison out of American relations with the Arab world.

At least in a preliminary sense, they have started a discussion. The initial working paper on the Kennedy School website was downloaded 275,000 times, throwing Israel's most ferocious partisans into a panic. Deploying a McCarthyite tactic, the *New York Sun* quickly sought to link the authors to white supremacist David Duke. *The New Republic* published a basketful of hostile pieces. Several pro-Israel congressmen initiated an embarrassing effort—ignored by the institution's president—to get the Naval War College to cancel scheduled lectures by the two. In a column about "the Mearsheimer-Walt fiasco," neoconservative writer Daniel Pipes summed up his dilemma: it would have been better, Pipes said, to have ignored the essay by "two obscure academics" so that it disappeared "down the memory hole" instead of becoming "the monument that it now is." Pipes was wrong about this. Hostile reaction to the piece hadn't inspired a quarter of a million downloads. With the United

States mired in a quagmire in Iraq, increasingly detested in the Muslim world, and wedded to an Israel policy that, beyond America's borders, seems bizarre to friend and foe alike, Walt and Mearsheimer had touched a topic that was crying out for serious analysis.

And the book could do more than the article. Arguments could be filled out, footnotes could be easily read. The 2006 Lebanon War—which saw the American Congress endorse the Israeli bombardment by the kind of margin that would satisfy Nicolae Ceausescu, while seeming genuinely puzzled that moderate Arab leaders did not join their applause—was analyzed as a test case. A book could continue the discussion and deepen it. But the book's enemies (how odd that a book could have enemies, but there is no better word for it) had time to prepare their ideological trenches, and within a month or two of publication, one could see the shape of the defense.

By the end of October, two months after *The Israel Lobby* appeared in stores, there had not been a single positive review in the mass-market media. For a long time it seemed that no editor dared trust the subject to a gentile, causing blogger Philip Weiss to ask cheekily, "Do the goyim get to register an Opinion Re Walt/Mearsheimer?" By then, the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page, the *New York Sun*, and *The New Republic* between them must have printed 25 attacks on Walt and Mearsheimer, virtually all of them designed to portray the authors as beyond the pale of rational discourse.

Anti-Semitism was not a credible charge. The authors make clear that the lobby isn't representative of the views of all or even most American Jews, and they support an Israel within recognized boundaries. Their recommendation that the United States treat Israel like a normal country is hard to demonize.

Ditto their repeated assertions that lobbying is a perfectly normal part of the American system and that conflicted or divided loyalties have become commonplace in the modern world. But what many did was to discuss the book in a context of anti-Semitism, to convey the impression that *The Israel Lobby* was a deeply anti-Semitic book without explicitly saying so. Thus Jeffrey Goldberg, in a 6,000-word *New Republic* piece, introduced Walt and Mearsheimer after a detour through Osama bin Laden, Father Coughlin, Charles Lindbergh, and, of course, David Duke. He eventually called the book “the most sustained attack ... against the political enfranchisement of American Jews since the era of Father Coughlin.”

Samuel G. Freedman in the *Washington Post* opened his discussion of the book by invoking the New Testament concept of original sin, whose burden one can escape only through acceptance of Jesus Christ. A passage from Romans, Freedman claims, framed the book’s argument—“if unintentionally.” When was the last time the *Washington Post* introduced a serious foreign affairs book with Bible talk that had no bearing on the work in question?

One of several *Wall Street Journal* attacks on the work claimed, “it is apparently the authors’ position that ... [in the face of Arab lobbying efforts] American Jews are obliged to stay silent.” This statement is more than a misrepresentation of Walt and Mearsheimer’s argument, it is a flat-out lie. Did the editors who assigned and published the piece know this? Was discrediting the book so important that normal American journalistic standards had to be waived?

Another track of the demonization campaign was the repeated effort to cancel the authors’ appearances or to demand that opposing speakers be invited to “rebut” their noxious views, a

format hardly typical for authors on book tours. Unfortunately, these initiatives sometimes succeeded, as when the Chicago Council for Global Affairs cancelled an event at a venue where the two professors had spoken many times before. Some efforts to marginalize the book were more like parody, as when Congressman Elliot Engel complained that Professor Mearsheimer had been invited to participate in a Columbia Uni-

SOME EFFORTS TO MARGINALIZE THE BOOK WERE MORE LIKE PARODY, AS WHEN CONGRESSMAN ENGEL COMPLAINED THAT PROFESSOR MEARSHEIMER HAD BEEN INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN A COLUMBIA FORUM ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM.

versity forum on academic freedom.

It would be naïve to think that the campaign waged against the authors had no impact. It managed to muddy the debate about the book. Even on some of the wonkier Washington blogs, where there was manifest interest in contending with the book’s arguments, the focus got shifted to whether *The Israel Lobby* was anti-Semitic. As one frustrated commenter on Ezra Klein’s blog wrote, “[P]art of the theory is that the power of the ‘lobby’ is to effectively remove certain topics from the debate. And the closest we come to debating those topics is a meta-discussion of whether debating those topics is appropriate or some evidence of anti-semitism/self hating Jewry.” Klein rued that “marginalizing the authors as anti-semitic is more effective than arguing back their viewpoint.”

The barrage also had an intimidation effect, a sort of “shock and awe” for the political journalism set. What humble book-review editor could fail to be impressed by the sheer volume of rhetoric painting the book as disreputable or avoid wondering what bombs might explode under his own career if he asked former national security adviser Brent

Scowcroft or Palestinian-American professor Rashid Khalidi to review the book. Television producers took note as well. While Mearsheimer managed an amiable ten minutes on “The Colbert Report,” the authors got nowhere near the regular public-affairs discussion shows. Scholars and writers got the message: if men as esteemed in their field as Walt and Mearsheimer were subject to the Coughlin/Duke treatment and had their

appearances cancelled, surely those less cushioned by tenure and eminence had good cause to keep silent. This probably explained the sheer ferocity of the campaign against *The Israel Lobby*.

Not all the negative reviews were as egregious as those cited above. But those that tried to address the substance of the book tended to land weak blows. Les Gelb’s critique in the *New York Times* was representative. His central point was that if the Israel lobby—actually, he incorrectly claimed that Walt and Mearsheimer called it a “Jewish lobby”—was indeed so powerful, why has every American president over the past 40 years “privately favored” the return of the Palestinian territories and the establishment of a Palestinian state, and why has Washington consistently “expressed displeasure” at Israel’s settlement expansion? This is precisely the question to which Walt and Mearsheimer provide an answer. If, as is indeed the case, most American presidents have “privately” sought Israeli withdrawal, and since Israel is extraordinarily dependent on American largesse, why has the United States never seriously put pressure on Israel to stop the settlements and give

back the land? How did Israel manage to move 400,000 settlers into the West Bank in 40 years, often using American funds, if this was contrary to the wishes of every president? Gelb goes on to acknowledge that Walt and Mearsheimer were prescient in their opposition to Bush's Iraq folly, but asserts that the Israel lobby had nothing do with the decision to go to war. Bush and Cheney needed no lobbying on this point, and they don't about Iran either.

This last area is easily the most disputed point between Walt and Mearsheimer and those reviewers who sought to answer their book rather than smear it. The Israel lobby, the two assert, helped drive the United States into Baghdad. It couldn't have done it by itself—that required 9/11 and Bush and Cheney. But, argue Mearsheimer and Walt, “absent the lobby's influence, there almost certainly would not have been a war. The lobby was a necessary but not sufficient condition for a war that is a strategic disaster for the United States.”

This is a powerful polemical charge, if only because tens of millions of Americans who could care less who has sovereignty over the West Bank recognize that the Iraq War has been a painful failure on every level. But is it true? *The Economist* says the argument about Iraq “doesn't quite stand up,” but might make sense if “neoconservatives and the Israel lobby were the same thing.” Leonard Fein, who writes on the dovish Americans for Peace Now website, called the charge “monstrous” and accused the authors of treating the lobby and neoconservatives “as if the two are interchangeable.” Are they?

On one aspect of the argument, the historical record is clear. The two authors do valuable service by documenting the near hysterical “attack Iraq now” recommendations made by various Israeli politicians to American audiences during the run-up to the war.

Benjamin Netanyahu, whom the U.S. Congress customarily treats with the kind of deference it might reserve for a Lincoln returned from the dead, warned senators and congressmen that Saddam was developing nukes that could be delivered in suitcases and satchels, and Shimon Peres told Americans that Saddam was as dangerous as bin Laden. The lobbying was so blatant that some political consultants warned Israel to cool it, lest Americans come to believe that the war in Iraq was waged “to protect Israel rather than to protect America.” AIPAC, too, pushed for the invasion. It is clear that the Israel lobby, as everyone understands it, was part of the rush-to-war atmosphere that swept the capital in 2002.

IN 1979, MENACHEM BEGIN GAVE JERRY FALWELL A PRIVATE JET AS A GIFT AND SOON AFTER BESTOWED UPON HIM THE JABOTINSKY MEDAL .

But the critics do have a point: AIPAC and similar groups played a comparatively minor part in the frenzy. But what of the neoconservatives, who had openly pushed for war against Saddam since the late 1990s and who held several key posts in the Bush administration?

For Walt and Mearsheimer, neoconservatives are an integral part of the lobby, and indeed, for their argument to make sense, the lobby has to be defined broadly. Of course there is AIPAC, which exists to influence Congress, and its myriad associated groups that raise money for candidates. The recent emergence of Christian Zionism as an electoral force is an important addition, adding ethnic and social diversity and increased political weight to the lobby. This is a sociologically and psychologically rich area, which the authors don't explore as deeply as they might. What currents in American Protestantism suddenly made Israel so compelling? It is

interesting to learn, for example, that in 1979, Menachem Begin gave Jerry Falwell a private jet as a gift and soon after bestowed upon him the Jabotinsky Medal for “outstanding achievement.” (Other recipients include Elie Wiesel and Leon Uris.) But such facts, intriguing as they are, don't entirely speak for themselves. And whatever enhanced political clout Christian Zionism brought to the lobby, it did not include access and influence to inner decision-making sanctums of the Pentagon and White House or the ability to start a war.

That required the neoconservatives. The path that took the United States from 9/11 to Iraq has yet to be precisely documented, but it is generally accepted that Bush, Cheney, and other key policy-

makers became converts to neoconservative views after the attack, if they weren't already sympathetic. This is important because neoconservatism has a broad gravitational pull that more focused lobbying groups, no matter how effective, can never match.

It is one thing to motivate a senator or congressman to vote for “pro-Israel” legislation—and AIPAC does that well. The recent Kyl-Lieberman bill labeling Iran's military “terrorist” was reportedly first drafted by AIPAC, and an AIPAC aide's boast that he could have the signatures of 70 senators on a napkin within 24 hours was altogether believable.

But that kind of lobbying has obvious limitations. How many of those 70 senators would vote the lobby's way while discretely rolling their eyes, disliking the pressure they are subjected to but willing to go along because it is the course of least resistance? People don't start wars for such reasons.

Neoconservatism is something far more than advocacy of the interests of a foreign country. It is a full-blown ideological system, which shapes the way people interpret events and view their own society and its relation to the world. Yes, its foreign-policy views are strongly pro-Israel. The main shapers of neoconservatism would readily argue that their foreign-policy positions were good for Israel, while those they opposed imperiled the Jewish state. No one who has spent time with major neocons would doubt the centrality of Israel to their worldview or their attachment to the no-compromise-with-Arabs parts of the Israeli political spectrum. But such attitudes come embedded in a larger set of viewpoints, which are now fairly disseminated among the American elite. While it is one thing for a lawmaker to accommodate the Israel lobby over something like the Kyl-Lieberman bill, it

Assassin's Gate, New Yorker writer and author George Packer gives one of the most nuanced portraits of the attitudes of the Bush administration's intellectuals, exploring the difficult to pin down matter of how intellectuals' attitudes seep into policy choices.) But in view of their convictions and pivotal positions inside the executive branch and ability to shape policy at the very top, to say that neoconservatives "overlap" with the Israel lobby hardly does them justice: the faction might more properly be described as, to borrow the well-known phrase, the highest stage of the Israel lobby.

Moreover, as an ideological movement, neoconservatism has a reach that more focused pro-Israel advocacy could never duplicate. Does one call Donald Rumsfeld a neoconservative? Few do. While obviously quite capable, he isn't known as an intellectual, isn't Jewish

and those abroad. In England, reviewers for the major papers (including the Murdoch-owned *Times*) treated the book's argument as self-evidently true. Geoffrey Wheatcroft, author of a prize-winning book on Zionism, noted in *The Guardian* that it must be obvious to a 12 year old that the Israel alliance, "far from advancing American interests, gravely damages them and has hindered every American endeavour in Arab countries or the whole Muslim world." Israel's most influential paper, *Ha'aretz*, ran a review by Daniel Levy, who was involved in the last serious round of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. He told his readers that Walt and Mearsheimer's most shrill detractors either had "not read the book, are emotionally incapable of dealing with harsh criticism of something they hold so close, or are intentionally avoiding substantive debate on the issue." Like others, Levy draws a line between the neocons and the Israel lobby proper and explains the Iraq War as a sort of perfect storm: Bush and Cheney, 9/11, many neoconservatives in the executive branch, and for the first time a Republican administration with Christian Zionists as a substantial part of its electoral base. He regrets that mainstream parts of the lobby have been co-opted by the neocons and closes with a plea for moderate Israelis to take American politics seriously and devote as much attention to forming American alliances as the Israeli Right does. This is very welcome advice, for Americans as well, because, as Walt and Mearsheimer stress (and Levy helpfully repeats), it is not Israel per se but Israel as an occupier that constitutes a major strategic liability for the United States.

But it should be noted that casual newspaper readers in Israel, in Britain, and soon in the rest of Europe, where the book is being translated into seven languages, are being treated to far more

IT IS NOT ISRAEL PER SE BUT ISRAEL AS AN OCCUPIER THAT CONSTITUTES A MAJOR STRATEGIC LIABILITY FOR THE UNITED STATES.

is quite another for an executive-branch policymaker to see the world through a neocon perspective, to have fully internalized slogans like "moral clarity" and "Islamofascism" and "the lessons of appeasement" and elevated them as lodestars.

Neoconservatives did play a crucial role in preparing the Iraq War—in the press, in generating dubious intelligence conclusions and piping them into the executive branch, and in framing an argument that George Bush would be "surrendering" to terror if he didn't attack Iraq. It was a performance that more conventional lobbying organizations like AIPAC or the Zionist Organization of America couldn't match in their wildest dreams. Walt and Mearsheimer don't go into this history deeply. (In *The*

(though of course not all neocons are Jewish), isn't an ex-liberal or leftist. He is usually described as a Republican "nationalist," though he pretty much delegated Iraq policy to men—Paul Wolfowitz, Doug Feith, and others—who fit most classical definitions of "neoconservative." But there are connections: in the 1980s Rumsfeld was enlisted by Midge Decter to chair the neoconservative Committee for the Free World, so certainly the neocon cast of mind was not unfamiliar to him. In short, just as the boundaries of the Israel lobby are blurry, so are those of neoconservatism. The revival of terms like "fellow traveler" would probably be helpful.

The most striking aspect of the reception of *The Israel Lobby* was the distance between the reviews in the U.S.

nanced and serious discussion of *The Israel Lobby* than Americans have been.

At least there has been the blogosphere. One wouldn't know it from the major American newspapers or magazine reviews, but a fresh breeze is beginning to blow. *The Israel Lobby* did receive more attention on the serious blogs than any other book this year. M.J. Rosenberg, the director of policy analysis for Israel Policy Forum and a prominent "two-state solution" advocate, describes the influence of the book as enormous: "Capitol Hill staffers are talking about the book, everybody is arguing about it, people are intrigued. ... it has opened up discussion."

Despite, or perhaps because of, ferocious attacks in *The New Republic* and the *Wall Street Journal*, *The Israel Lobby* made it onto the *New York Times* bestseller list. It remained there only a couple of weeks, soon displaced by Alan Greenspan's memoir and Laura Ingraham's latest. But the book's influence is still early in its trajectory. International sales will be large, there will be paperback editions, and the book will be assigned in course readings. *The Israel Lobby* will be around a long time, perhaps longer than AIPAC itself. Israeli peace activist Uri Avnery has already compared the work to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Philip Weiss to Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. To build upon Tony Karon's analogy that glasnost is breaking out in the American Jewish community, and that younger Jews are questioning Israel like never before, *The Gulag Archipelago* didn't receive good reviews in Russia when it came out either.

Walt and Mearsheimer haven't written the last word on American-Israeli relations. Other books, more psychologically probing and more discursive, are in the works or waiting to be written. But in clearing the first path since the pivotal date of 9/11, these two authors have done their country a great service. ■

Turkish officials and senior military officers are angry about the results of the Nov. 5 meeting in Washington

between Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and President George W. Bush. An agreement was reached whereby the U.S. would not oppose Turkey's plans to launch air strikes against the PKK in Northern Iraq whenever the Turks have "actionable intelligence" on PKK targets. The U.S. promised to provide information on the terrorists, including location data for bombing attacks, but Turkish military officers believe this is a delaying tactic by Bush. The key word is "actionable." They doubt that any genuine operational intelligence on PKK targets will come from the U.S. and that the "actionable" requirement gives Americans *de facto* control over Turkish military actions inside Iraq. It is not clear to what extent Erdogan knew he was being manipulated.



On Nov. 2, Al Jazeera's website alleged that the still secret Sept. 6 Israeli air force raid over Syria was actually carried out by the U.S. Air Force.

The website quoted anonymous Israeli and Arab sources as saying that two American jets armed with tactical nuclear weapons carried out an attack on a nuclear site under construction, with Israeli F-15 and F-16 jets providing cover for the U.S. planes. According to the report, the site was hit by one bomb and was totally destroyed. Intelligence sources in the U.S. state that the Al Jazeera report is false and is disinformation that plays to the common misperception that everything Israel does is directed by the United States, though it is not clear who had a motive to spread the story. If a tactical nuclear device had been used for the attack, there would have been considerable radioactive residue in the air that would have been detected. Also, it is not clear why the USAF should have been involved at all since the Israelis, who have not signed a peace treaty with Syria, were fully capable of undertaking the attack.



The National Intelligence Estimate is the intelligence community's "best assessment" of a foreign-policy issue, but the politically manipulated 2002 NIE on Iraq was full of false information and bad assessments that contributed to the Iraq War.

The "lessons learned" from Iraq have meant that all of the information and judgments of the impending NIE on Iran are being looked at very critically. The report is already more than one year late, and it has apparently been rejected in three different drafts because the White House does not find its conclusions "strong enough." The problem is that intelligence on Iran is poor, and no one is comfortable with taking a hard position on the alleged nuclear-weapons program or on other key issues. Nevertheless, the White House continues to want a document that can be used to support military action if that should become necessary. A leading analyst working on the report believes that no matter what the outcome, the probability that there will be a war with Iran in the next nine months is 85 percent.

Philip Giraldi, a former CIA Officer, is a partner in Cannistraro Associates, an international security consultancy.

[American idol]

State Religion

Democratism allows its acolytes to claim infallibility and purge heretics.
How was Bush converted?

By Patrick J. Buchanan

FOR GENERATIONS many among our Western elites have disbelieved in a God who is Creator and Judge of mankind. And like the Israelites at the foot of Sinai who created a golden calf to worship, modern man creates his own golden calves.

Ideology is modernity's golden calf—our substitute for religious faith. Russell Kirk called it “a dogmatic political theory which is an endeavor to substitute secular goals and doctrines for religious goals and doctrines.”

Ideologies are created by men of words to explain the world to come, in which they will carry the lamps, lead the way, and enjoy the prestige and power of the priestly class to be displaced. For deracinated intellectuals, ideology holds an irresistible attraction, for it both offers an explanation of how the world works and satisfies the lust for power. As Raymond Aron wrote in *Opium of the Intellectuals*, “When the intellectual feels no longer attached either to the community or the religion of his forbears, he looks to progressive ideology to fill the vacuum.”

In *The Drug of Ideology*, Kirk defined what ideology was, and what it was not:

‘Ideology’ does not mean political theory or principle, even though many journalists and some professors commonly employ the term in that sense. Ideology really means

political fanaticism—and, more precisely, the belief that this world of ours can be converted into a Terrestrial Paradise through the operation of positive law and positive planning.

Kirk deplored “democratism,” the ideology of the neoconservatives who attached themselves to the party of Reagan. He considered them “often clever ... never wise.”

An instance of this lack of wisdom is the Neoconservatives’ infatuation with ideology. Ideology ... is political fanaticism: at best, it is the substitution of slogans for real political thought. Ideology animates, in George Orwell’s phrase, ‘the streamlined men who think in slogans and talk in bullets.’

The neoconservatives’ ambition to create “an American ideology” was to Kirk a “puerile infatuation.” Yet it was not unsuccessful. For it was the conversion of George W. Bush to neoconservative ideology that took America into the war that destroyed his presidency and brought an end to the American Century.

* * *

In every American war, our leaders have invoked higher and nobler ends to persuade the people to sacrifice and to sanctify the cause. Almost always, it is

an ex post facto sanctification. Wars begun for national interests are said to be fought for universal principles.

The Revolution was fought to rid us of British rule. To justify what Parliament and King called treason, Jefferson sought to embed the rebellion in the larger cause of freedom and equality for all men. Though a slaveholder who thought a “natural aristocracy” was born to rule, Jefferson wrote: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal ...”

From London, Dr. Johnson sneered, “[H]ow is it that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of negroes?” On Johnson’s death, the chief beneficiary in his will was his ex-slave. Yet Jefferson, from the way he lived his life, did not truly believe his most famous lines: he did not free his slaves on his death. As Kirk wrote, “The Declaration of 1776 is simply a declaration—and a highly successful piece of immediate political propaganda; such philosophical concepts as find expression therein are so mistily expressed as to mean all things to all men, then and now.”

At Gettysburg, too, Lincoln sought to ennoble the war by embedding the Union cause in the higher cause of the equality of all men: “Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.”

But equality was not the belief of Lincoln or the policy of the nation he led. In his first inaugural address, he endorsed a constitutional amendment that would have made slavery permanent in the 15 states where it existed. He wrote to Horace Greeley, "My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery." The Union was the cause for which the Union fought.

The Gettysburg Address was a "war speech" heard by but a few standing near Lincoln on the battlefield. Decades later, it was seized upon by Progressives, who reinterpreted it to persuade the nation that their goal, democratizing not only America but the world, was the cause for which the Union had fought and Lincoln had died.

Thus were the words of Jefferson and Lincoln—neither of whom believed in the literal truth of what they wrote—declared holy writ, America's gospel, that we were all obligated to carry to mankind. Any who rejected the mission were "isolationists," faithless to the cause of America.

* * *

In April 1917, when America plunged into the Great War that had been bleeding Europe, Wilson declared that this was "the war to end war" and "make the world safe for democracy." He had been re-elected in November 1916 on the slogan "He Kept Us Out of War." With the causes and objects of Europe's war, he had said, "we are not concerned. The obscure fountains from which its stupendous flood has burst forth we are not interested to search for or explore." But once German U-boats began to sink U.S. ships running supplies to England, it suddenly became a war for civilization.

When Wilson arrived at Paris in 1919, his Fourteen Points that the Germans had accepted as the terms of armistice were cast aside by the Allies. His rhetoric about

the self-determination of all nations was moving. But this was not the reason the war began. And Wilson's words were mocked by the vengeful peace the war produced and he brought home.

World War II, children are taught, was a great struggle between fascism and freedom. Yet Britain did not go to war because Hitler was a National Socialist, but because he attacked Poland, to whose authoritarian regime Britain had given a war guarantee. America did not go to war against Japan because she was fascist, but because Japan attacked us at Pearl Harbor. America did not go to war against Germany or Italy until Hitler and Mussolini declared war on us. Stalin began the war as Hitler's ally, ended it as our ally, murdered fascists and democrats indiscriminately, and was, throughout, the greatest enemy freedom had ever known. FDR was delighted to divide Europe with him.

ALL MODERN IDEOLOGIES HAVE THE SAME IRRATIONAL ROOT: THE PERMEATION OF POLITICS WITH MILLENARIAN IDEAS OF PSEUDO-RELIGIOUS CHARACTER. NOT ONLY MARXISM AND NAZISM, BUT NEOCONSERVATISM MEETS THE TEST OF AN IDEOLOGY.

World War II was a just war, but America fought it, as we have fought all our wars, for national, not ideological, ends.

In the Atlantic Charter agreed upon in August 1941, Churchill and FDR, echoing Wilson, declared that all territorial adjustments at war's end must be in accord with the wishes of the peoples concerned. But they yielded to all of Stalin's demands—for slices of Romania and Finland, for the annexation of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, for half of Poland, for control of ten Christian nations and Albania, for the ethnic cleansing of 13 million Germans from lands on which their ancestors had lived for centuries. All were monstrous

crimes against humanity, sold as triumphs of democracy. Churchill and Roosevelt either did not believe in the democratist ideology they professed or did not believe in it enough to stand up for it in Stalin's presence.

* * *

Totalitarian ideologies are, in Edmund Burke's phrase, "armed doctrines." Communism, Nazism, and fascism have been among the bloodiest, but as Gerhardt Niemeyer wrote, "Ideology is not confined to communists and fascists. We, too, have our share of it..."

All modern ideologies have the same irrational root: the permeation of politics with millenarian ideas of pseudo-religious character. Not only Marxism and Nazism, but anarchism, socialism, and neoconservatism meet the test of an ideology. For each is said to explain the direction in which the world is going, or

should be made to go, and has a hold that contradictory evidence cannot shake. And it was the midlife conversion of George Bush, after the trauma of 9/11, to the ideology of neoconservatism, which held out the promise of a world converted by the force of American ideas and arms to democracy, that killed his presidency.

When the Soviet Union broke apart in 1991, Americans awoke to the realization that the United States was the last superpower standing. U.S. military, economic, financial, cultural, and political power was unrivaled, unprecedented. No nation had ever had global dominance in so many fields.

Even before the Wall fell, several of us who had been allies in the Cold War were invited by *The National Interest* to outline a foreign policy for an era in which in great enemy threatened the United States. Former LBJ aide Ben Wattenberg called for a worldwide crusade to “wage democracy.”

Having worked with the neoconservatives in the Reagan White House, I was aware that they were as ideologically driven as our Cold War enemies. They believed not just in defeating Soviet ideology but in imposing their own on mankind. In an essay entitled “America First—and Second and Third,” I warned against “the democratist temptation”:

With the Cold War ending, we should look with a cold eye on the internationalist set, never at a loss for new ideas to divert U.S. wealth and power into crusades and causes having little or nothing to do with the true national interest of the United States. High among these is the democratist temptation, the worship of democracy as a form of governance and the concomitant ambition to see all mankind embrace it, or explain why not. Like all idolatries, democratism substitutes a false god for the real, a love of process for a love of country.

To understand how President Bush launched an unprovoked war to democratize Mesopotamia and the Middle East, we must understand the ideology to which he had converted.

After the 9/11 attacks, a dramatic change came over George W. Bush. He began to speak in a different tone and a different way. “From the outset,” wrote Andrew Bacevich, “President Bush looked upon that war as something of a crusade and he himself as something of an agent of divine will.” To Bush, the world had taken upon a clarity approaching luminosity.

“Moral truth is the same in every culture, in every time, and in every place,” he told cadets at West Point in June 2002. Transparently, this is untrue. There may be one truth in the mind of God. But behind the clash of civilizations lies a clash of beliefs about moral truth. Do we not ourselves disagree on the morality of capital punishment, assisted suicide, abortion, and homosexuality? What many Americans see as the most progressive age in which man has ever lived, others view as a time of decadence and moral decline.

“The requirements of freedom apply fully ... to the entire Islamic world,” the president claimed. But Islam does not mean freedom. It means “submission”—to the will of Allah. In the Islamic world, there is no freedom to proselytize for faiths such as Christianity. The secular Western idea—that all religions should be treated equally and permitted to convert nonbelievers—is punishable heresy.

Consider again Bush’s words: “The requirements of freedom apply fully ... to the entire Islamic world.” How arrogant this must sound to the world of Islam. Imagine the reaction among Americans if Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, in defiant echo declared: “The requirements of Islam apply fully to the entire Western world.”

“We are in a conflict between good and evil, and America will call evil by its name.” But which is the evil side in Chechnya, Sri Lanka, Kashmir? In World War II, we allied with Stalin, in the Cold War with the Shah of Iran and Chile’s General Pinochet, in the Gulf War with Syria’s Hafez al-Assad. Did we act immorally by enlisting fallen angels and even great devils to crush Lucifer?

If one extracts Bush’s moral claims—that we are good and they are evil; that ours is the “single surviving model of human progress”; that America’s idea of freedom must “apply fully to the entire Islamic world”—the president is

declaring ideological war. This is the mirror image of Trotsky’s permanent revolution.

When Nikita Khrushchev declared, “Your grandchildren will live under Communism!” Americans were angered. Why should not others react angrily when we tell them we are good and they are evil and we will not rest until their children live in a society more like ours? Will they not resist us, as we resisted the Communists? And if these nations do not threaten us, why are their undemocratic societies our concern?

In 1999, candidate Bush spoke of humility as a virtue: “Let us have an American foreign policy that reflects American character. The modesty of true strength. The humility of real greatness.” This is the voice of prudence—a conservative voice. Contrast it with the vaulting pride of the triumphant war chief at West Point: *“The 20th century ended with a single surviving model of human progress.”*

Even as he spoke, China was into its second decade of 10-percent growth, built on autocracy, mercantilism, and repression, a model other nations have begun to adopt as China’s growth continues to run at triple the rate of the United States’. Clearly, Bush sees the West as the archetype of what the world should become. But to many in Asia, the West is the civilization of yesterday. In the Middle East, it is viewed as decadent and dying. Even in America, many see their country in an advanced stage of social and political decline.

* * *

It was in his address to the National Endowment for Democracy, Nov. 6, 2003, that President Bush took final vows in the ideology to which he had been converted.

“Successful societies limit the power of the state and the power of the military—so that governments respond to

the will of the people, and not the will of an elite." By this standard, 5th-century Athens, a slaveholding society ruled by an aristocratic elite, was not a successful society. The Roman republic and Roman Empire were not either. The England of Elizabeth I, the France of Louis XIV and Napoleon, the Prussia of Frederick the Great, the Russia of Peter the Great, the Germany of Bismarck, all fall short by the Bush standard. The Virginia of Washington, Jefferson, and Patrick Henry, run by a propertied elite of white men was never successful. Nor was the United States until the passage of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, Fifteenth, and Nineteenth Amendments.

CONSERVATISM VIEWS ALL IDEOLOGIES WITH SKEPTICISM, AND THE MORE ZEALOUS AND FANATIC WITH HOSTILITY.

"Successful societies guarantee religious liberty." By this standard, the Spain of Ferdinand and Isabella, which expelled the Moors and Jews and countenanced the Inquisition, but built the first of the great Western empires, was an unsuccessful society.

"Successful societies . . . recognize the rights of women." Were there no successful societies before 1900? Has there ever been a greater example of hubris by a president than to lay down the "essential principles for successful societies" and cast into outer darkness every society that does not resemble America after we enlisted in the feminist revolution?

"Sixty years of Western nations excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe," Bush told his nodding listeners, thus declaring failures the policies of 11 presidents, while asserting the moral superiority of his own. Bush was wrong on both counts. During the Cold War, the U.S. had the

support of the Shah of Iran, Sadat and Mubarak in Egypt, the Saudi royal family, the kings of Jordan and Morocco, and the Gulf states. Does Bush believe support for these autocrats "did nothing to make us safe," though we won the Cold War and expelled Moscow from the Middle East?

Were President Bush a pundit, his bromides might not matter. But for seven years, he has made foreign policy for the most powerful nation on earth. And having succumbed to what George Kennan called "the evils of utopian enthusiasms," he has plunged us into war to create a democracy in an Islamic country that had never known it. We are

paying a hellish price for not heeding the wise counsel of Kirk, who warned of this fanatic ideology: "To expect that all the world should, and must, adopt the peculiar political institutions of the United States—which often do not work very well even at home—is to indulge the most unrealistic of visions; yet just that seems to be the hope and expectation of many Neoconservatives. . . . Such foreign policies are such stuff as dreams are made on; yet they lead to the heaps of corpses of men who died in vain."

True conservatism is the antithesis of ideology. It is the negation of ideology. For conservatism is grounded in the past. Its principles are derived from the Constitution, experience, history, tradition, custom, and the wisdom of those who have gone before us—"the best that has been thought and said." It does not purport to know the future. It is about preserving the true, the good, the beautiful. Conservatism views all ideologies with skepticism, and the more zealous and fanatic with hostility.

* * *

In his Second Inaugural Address, President Bush returned to his themes of liberty as indivisible and of America's freedom in permanent peril if the world is not made wholly free. *"We are led, by events and common sense, to one conclusion: The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands."* But history flatly contradicts this. America has always been free. The world has never been wholly free. Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Tojo ruled almost all of Eurasia in 1941. Yet America was free. Bush was indulging in hyperbole to set up a dramatic declaration of the mission he would pursue the rest of his presidency: *"So it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world."* Wilson was going to make the world safe for democracy. Bush was going far beyond—to make the whole world democratic. But if our goal is "ending tyranny in our world," we have our work cut out for us.

There are 190 nations. Fifty African and Arab nations and China may be fairly described as autocratic, despotic, or tyrannical. Bush had just asserted a right to intervene in the internal affairs of every one. And he had just put on America's enemies list every unfree nation on earth from Azerbaijan to Zimbabwe.

But the re-elected president was not done. He declared his intent to hector even friendly foreign leaders on the progress they are making in meeting U.S. standards of democracy, *"We will persistently clarify the choice between every ruler and nation. The moral choice between oppression, which is always wrong, and freedom, which is eternally right. . . . We will encourage reform in other governments by*

making clear that success in our relations will require the decent treatment of their own people."

"President Bush," I wrote the day after that inaugural, "is launching a crusade even more ambitious and utopian than Wilson's. His crusade, too, will end, as Wilson's did, in disillusionment for him and tragedy for his country."

So it has come to pass. But in his 2007 State of the Union Address, having lost both houses of Congress and facing defeat in Iraq, Bush continued to defend his war in terms of the ideology whose evangelist he had become: "*This war,*" he said, "*is a decisive ideological struggle. ... What every terrorist fears most is human freedom—societies where men and women make their own*

under Ottoman rule: "[K]now ye not, Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow?"

* * *

What explains this "divinization of democracy"? Harboring no such faith, the Founding Fathers created a republic, for, as John Adams warned, "the people have waged everlasting war against the rights of men. ... The numbers of men in all ages have preferred ease, slumber and good cheer to liberty. ... The multitude must be kept in check."

It is one thing to believe democracy a superior form of government. It is another to ascribe to it attributes God alone possesses. This is idolatry. This is ideology.

that there never was, for any long time ... a mean, sluggish, careless people that ever had a good government of any kind." It is not the system that determines the character of a country, but the character of a people. On reading of Sunni insurgents, Shia militias, and al-Qaeda bombers, one recalls Burke's words:

Men are qualified for civil liberty in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains on their own appetites. ... Society cannot exist unless a controlling power upon will and appetite be placed somewhere, and the less of it there is within, the more there is without.

The character of Islamic peoples, formed by their history, beliefs, and faith, has, for centuries, called authoritarians to power. If we dethrone their tyrants, dismantle their states, and disband their armies, when we depart, the character of the people will re-create the institutions we have torn down. Human beings are not clean sheets of paper on which idealistic Wilsonian Man can write his blueprints for a democratic society.

At a speech in Prague, President Bush explained why Communism was a god that failed. "*The communists had an imperial ideology that claimed to know the directions of history. But in the end it was overpowered by ordinary people who wanted to live their lives, and worship their God, and speak the truth to their children.*" Replace "communists" with "democratists," and one is close to the truth as to why Bush's world democratic revolution also failed. ■

Adapted from the forthcoming Day of Reckoning by Patrick J. Buchanan. Copyright (c) 2007 by the author and reprinted by permission of Thomas Dunne Books, an imprint of St. Martin's Press.

THIS IS THE HEART OF THE WAR WE ARE IN. AMERICANS BELIEVE IN FREEDOM FIRST. MUSLIMS BELIEVE IN ISLAM FIRST. WE DECIDE FOR US. DO WE ALSO DECIDE FOR THEM?

choices." Very American. And very mistaken. Terrorists detest our societies; they do not fear them. The suicide bombers of 9/11, Madrid, and London all plotted in free societies.

"*The great question of our day is whether America will help men and women in the Middle East to build free societies,*" said President Bush. But if we bleed America trying to give the men and women of the Middle East freedom, what do we do if they choose a society where *Sharia* is law? Should U.S. soldiers die for democracy in the Islamic world when democracy may produce victory for the political progeny of the Muslim Brotherhood?

This is the heart of the war we are in. Americans believe in freedom first. Muslims believe in Islam first. We decide for us. Do we also decide for them? Perhaps the best advice we can give our friends in the Middle East is the advice Byron gave the Greeks chafing

Democracy means rule by the people, and the people can be as corrupt as tyrants and kings. In 1901, a 26-year-old MP warned Parliament, "Democracy is more vindictive than Cabinets. The wars of peoples will be more terrible than those of kings." Was Churchill wrong about the character of the masses?

Democracy is not enough. It is but a wineskin into which may be poured wine or poison. As T.S. Eliot warned, democracy does not contain within itself the requisites for a moral society:

The term 'democracy' does not contain enough positive content to stand alone against the forces you dislike—it can easily be transformed by them. If you will not have God (and He is a jealous God), you should pay your respects to Hitler and Stalin.

Burke anticipated Eliot when he wrote, "Believe me, it is a great truth,

Overdue Good-bye

PAKISTANI PRESIDENT Pervez Musharraf has ruined whatever credibility he may have had when he claimed to be a source of stability and reform in his country. Declaring a state of emergency on Nov. 3, effectively imposing martial law, Musharraf has arrested opposition members of Benazir Bhutto's People's Party of Pakistan by the thousands, placed their leader under house arrest, and charged some outspoken dissidents with treason. Musharraf ostensibly announced the emergency rule for public safety, but it was obvious that this was a desperation move aimed at shoring up the last of his power.

The upheaval has been a long time coming, precipitated by Musharraf's attempts to suppress his political opposition. The scenes of police battering and dispersing protest marches were replays of a more limited crackdown on protesting lawyers in Islamabad in October, when the world's attention was diverted to the even more brutal repression of protesters in Burma.

Like another embattled U.S.-backed strongman and so-called reformer in Georgia, Musharraf brutally cracked down on protest marches, and likewise yielded to the demand for elections, set for Feb. 15. He has also tentatively agreed to give up his military position, but will remain in power as president following a widely boycotted presidential election last month.

Uncharacteristically, the Bush administration has condemned Musharraf's excesses and threatened to halt aid payments. Washington ought to take the next step and facilitate, or at least not prevent, Musharraf's departure from the political scene.

His voluntary exit would not be the disaster for Pakistan and America that

the general and many of his defenders here claim. Even many of Musharraf's critics have clouded the issue with misleading analogies. While Democratic presidential candidates Joe Biden and Bill Richardson both invoked the specter of 1979 Iran and the hostage crisis to call for Washington to stop backing Musharraf, they managed to make precisely the wrong arguments and endorsed the fears of Islamist revolution that have kept Pakistan policy paralyzed for years. Biden said, "The moderate majority must have a voice in the system and an outlet with elections. If not, moderates may find that they have no choice but to find common cause with extremists, just as the Shah's opponents did in Iran three decades ago."

Unlike Iran under the Shah, however, Pakistan has a political and legal system distinct from Musharraf and his ruling party, and it has a military deeply invested in the national economy. The military has its own interests in preserving stability and stifling a radical takeover. It retains the bulk of real power in Pakistan and has control of the nuclear arsenal.

Riddled with social and economic problems as the country may be, and compromised by sympathy with jihadis as some elements of the state security apparatus certainly are, Pakistan will not collapse into chaos if Musharraf goes. On the contrary, the longer he remains and pursues his counterproductive campaign against the tribes of Waziristan and North-West Frontier Province at Washington's behest, the greater the chances of conflict engulfing an even larger part of the country.

Musharraf's willingness to use the army for what many Pakistanis still see as a primarily American fight has added to the dissatisfaction with his rule and

client relationship with the United States. This is why it is imperative that Washington make a correction.

The Bush administration should stop pushing Islamabad to wage an offensive in the western provinces that has been clumsy in application and costly in soldiers' lives, managing at once to alienate the locals, revive the appeal of jihadism among the tribes, and create discontent within the army ranks. Outsourcing a large part of our fight to the Pakistanis has not succeeded and has badly destabilized Pakistan with suicide bombings in their major cities, providing the occasion for Musharraf to institute emergency rule. In principle, the truce that Musharraf struck with the tribes in western Pakistan last year—naturally denounced as "appeasement" by American hawks—was similar to the much-touted accommodation with Sunni tribesmen in western Iraq. Even if the truce would not have turned these tribes against jihadist elements, it could have ensured their neutrality. If the U.S. goal is to eliminate practical support from the Pakistan side of the border for a resurgent Taliban in Afghanistan and to isolate what remains of al-Qaeda, military action by the Pakistani central government only undermines that plan.

Musharraf is not the new Shah, a dictator whom the United States installed and maintained in power for decades, and his departure from the scene will not usher in a radical, anti-American regime. The Pakistani military and government have strong self-interest in preserving a good relationship with Washington, provided their long-term national interests are also taken seriously, so it is incumbent on Washington not to abuse that relationship with continued demands on another government to fight our battles for us. ■

Four Year Plan

Freshman orientation Lesson 1: all whites are racists.

By Richard B. Spencer

NEWARK, DEL.—As almost every aspect of the American university has been drenched in political correctness, a certain outrage fatigue has set in. Who is still shocked by news of Shakespeare being replaced by P. Diddy, lectures on the political implications of masturbation, and photographic retrospectives on the Black Panther Movement? Wouldn't it be best just to roll one's eyes and move on?

Perhaps not. Over the past two weeks, news has come out of Delaware that the state's public institution organized a freshmen orientation that, even for the most hardened of academic observers, would seem sinister and bizarre.

Last August, the Office of Residential Life gave all prospective RA's—the student residential advisers who manage the freshmen dorms—a "Diversity Training Handbook" that averred, "all white people living in the United States" are racists, implicated in an "institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression." The rest of the manual reads like history of the world as recounted by Al Sharpton. A professional "diversity trainer," Shakti Butler, was on hand to make sure the message got across.

In September, Residence Life scheduled one-on-one "orientation" sessions with these RA's and all 4,000 incoming freshmen. The students had expected to discuss roommate problems. Instead they got, "When were you first made aware of you race?" "When did you discover your sexual identity?" and "When have you felt oppressed?"

In group sessions, the freshmen were made to play act being a poor black family facing racial harassment. In

another variant, the RA's situated the students in the center of the dorm's common area and hung two signs on opposite walls, "Agree" and "Disagree." They then made a series of political statements—"gays should be able to marry," "affirmative action is justified," "the poor deserve to be poor"—and the freshmen were told to chose a side. Public shaming was the order of the day: the group was divided and students singled out who dared cross over to the non-progressive side of the room.

Throughout, grades were given, from "best" to "worst," based on a student's willingness to delve into his "identity" and get involved in the PC theater. The evaluations were kept secret from the freshmen and are still on file in the Office of ResLife. Sophomore Bill Rivers told me that one friend replied to the query "When have you felt oppressed?" with "When I checked the box marked 'white' on college applications, knowing it was going to hurt my chances of getting in." One hopes his RA didn't give him an "Enemy of the Dorm" designation.

Delaware is not exactly known as a hotbed of the radical Left. Indeed, the university's Jeffersonian architecture, nicely dressed students hurrying off to class, and surrounding belt of Victorian homes make it a postcard image of traditional education. Moreover, with just under 16,000 undergraduates and a Div. I-AA football team, UD doesn't show up on many radar screens. But within days of news breaking, it became a flashpoint for the national debate on academic culture.

The concerted effort to combat ResLife began in early September after

Peter Johnson, a UD parent, got word from his son of the goings-on in the dorms. Johnson contacted ResLife and politely asked to see copies of the program's reading list. He was stonewalled. On Sept. 24, Assistant Director Michele Kane wrote Johnson that sending the materials "without context would likely not be of any benefit." At this point, Johnson contacted the Philadelphia-based Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), a not-for-profit group dedicated to exposing speech codes and political indoctrination in academia. With FIRE backing Johnson, ResLife Directors Kathleen Kerr and James Tweeny agreed to release some materials. FIRE put them online. Outrage mounted.

As area papers picked up the story, ResLife went into "no comment" lockdown, removing materials from its website and refusing all interview requests (including mine). The administration pursued a kind of defensive minimalization. First, it claimed the program was never mandatory, but FIRE countered immediately with copies of e-mails RA's had sent to freshmen making it clear that attendance was required. Then on Nov. 1, first-year university President Patrick Harker simply shut the program down. Still, he was careful never to condemn ResLife, claiming that he acted with its consent and only wanted to make sure its programs were fulfilling their intended goals.

At a Faculty Senate meeting at which Provost Dan Rich echoed Harker, Professors Jan Blits and Linda Gottfredson, who have been the most articulate critics of ResLife among the faculty,

stressed that Delaware will continue being the “laughing stock of the nation” until the administration unequivocally disavows ResLife. Furthermore, Blits pointed out that many at UD could be in legal jeopardy. Under the so-called “Ku Klux Klan Act” of 1871, if political indoctrination is judged to be taking place at a state institution, the employees themselves can be held liable.

However Harker and Rich want to spin it, freshmen orientation was a disaster. But then the program is hardly unique. Indeed, ResLife—with its “diversity”-speak and winks to the radical Left—is representative of countless organizations at UD. And if such things are occurring at Delaware, then they’re occurring most everywhere. In this way, the ResLife program sheds a great deal of light on the nature of the contemporary university, and it’s worthwhile to examine it more closely.

One could begin with those Roger Kimball has called the “tenured radicals”: the baby-boom professors who were grad students in the ’60s and ’70s and throughout the ’80s and ’90s established themselves in Humanities departments. Much has already been written about this phenomenon—how the Canon was replaced with Gender Theory, how activists forwent the barricades and stormed the Association of University Professors, how Gen-X profs offer more of the same—and it’s not necessary to dwell on these matters here. Besides, the Delaware case reveals more about the operations of bureaucracy on campus than the inanities of the tenured faculty.

For of equal significance to the rise of the postmodern Left over the past quarter century has been the mushrooming of non-academic departments (still going strong). For every five entering freshman at UD, there’s one full- or part-time professional or bureaucrat. Across the country, offices of Institutional

Equity, Multicultural Programming, and Residential Life employ thousands; they’re long on ideological mission statements and short on real justification.

Any sensible person would think the position of ResLife director could be filled by a just-out-of-college type with a knack for throwing fun pizza parties—but then how to justify 13 fulltime administrators? ResLife has chosen to claim responsibility for “transforming students ... into functional adults” and directing “service learning” in the areas of “youth advocacy,” “women’s empowerment,” “ability awareness,” among others. ResLife’s whole “curriculum-based approach” even lets its directors vault themselves up to quasi-professor status.

Throughout ResLife’s curriculum, the words “intentional” and “structure” appear again and again. Indeed, the office seems to have a Four Year Plan for each student—and a checklist to make sure the “transformation” stays on track. Freshmen will “understand their social identities”; sophomores will “recognize that systematic oppression exists in our society”; by the time they’re seniors—New PC Persons—students will fully understand their duties in constructing a “sustainable society.”

Leading the charge, Adam Kissell and Samantha Harris of FIRE have called ResLife “totalitarian” and referred to the dorms as “re-education camps.” Such rhetoric can certainly get out of hand—no RA has yet attempted mass murder—but the comparison is apt. When Mao sent thousands of university students to “self-criticism camps,” their reformation was not complete until they condemned their own parents as reactionaries. Instructing a student body that is 83 percent white on the evils of “white privilege,” ResLife seems to have similar ambitions. In one of the few “evaluations” of freshmen that has been made available, a student who denounced her “racist and opiated [sic] father”

received a “best” rating from her RA.

Nevertheless, there’s little reason to believe that anyone on the ResLife staff is an actual leftist radical—or ever read a page of Marx or could even pronounce “Michel Foucault.” The office’s concern instead is to recite properly the dogmas of the academic Left as the sure-fire way of seeming relevant—even hip—and securing status and funding.

ResLife’s “diversity” obsession plays an important role in this. The office actually treats signs of insufficient tolerance as if they were assaults on a student’s safety. On its website, the office lists “Any instance that is perceived by those involved as being racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, homophobic, or otherwise oppressive” alongside fire, suicide, and rape as “emergency/crisis” situations that require immediate action. Who else could the university community rely on to police diversity than those dedicated officers at ResLife?

ResLife’s whole m.o. is laid bare in its internal document on “Strategic Change” from 2006. Here, Associate Director Tweeny outlines the office’s objectives, which include 1) “allocating resources to areas that are producing the outcomes we value” (read: “let’s jump on the ‘diversity’ bandwagon”); 2) “satisfy the requirements of accrediting agencies and funding agencies” (read: “make connections with gurus like Shakti Butler”); 3) “strengthen arguments for increased funding.” (Cha-Ching!)

In the “Diversity Facilitation” handbook, one suggested activity is to ask students to “pick your favorite mainstream institution, and do a little power structure research.” Perhaps the RAs should suggest that freshmen turn their critical gaze onto ResLife itself, all of whose top-level bureaucrats are white. (The most anyone of them can boast is to have once lived in the “internationally diverse” city of Washington, D.C.) Seen through cultural Marxist goggles, ResLife’s “diversity” fetish

seems little more than a game played by whites in which one seeks power by claiming to care about non-whites more than one's colleagues.

Understanding the motives of the RA's is more of a challenge. What could they have been thinking? Grant Newman, a former RA, related that the students who took part were hardly on the Left. Indeed, at least half were conservative Christians. While many of those probably never questioned the program out of fear, many more likely found a way to make "diversity" make sense to them. Sophomore Kelsey Lanan pointed out that her freshman-year RA was a devout Catholic but no less a "diversity" hawk.

At one point, Lanan's RA called an emergency hall meeting after noticing that someone had made an indenture with his fingernail on a cork bulletin board on which a "GLBT Pride" poster hung. The poster wasn't defaced, and most likely the act was done out of boredom, not hate. But Lanan's RA treated it as a "crisis" (according to ResLife guidelines, of course). She seemed quite sincere in denouncing this supposed attack on the most vulnerable in the dorm. In her mind, "diversity training" seems to have been conflated with "shepherding the flock" and "protecting the meek."

In defending ResLife, Newman said that its programs didn't amount to indoctrination because "there was no right answer. ... It is the process not the content." If he means that the goal was for students to internalize a discourse and regurgitate its shibboleths on all occasions, then he is most definitely correct.

After President Harker shut down freshman orientation, FIRE declared victory. But then most everything that gave birth to the program has remained firmly in place—at UD as everywhere else. Professor Blits joked that if anyone at ResLife were fired, they'd be quickly hired and promoted at Brown. ■

Are You Sure You Want a Democracy?

Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood does.

By Michael Brendan Dougherty

CAIRO—"We haven't yet established a Jeffersonian democracy in Egypt," Dr. Mohamed Kamal patiently explained to the journalists questioning his country's recent record of police brutality, political repression, and jailing of journalists for criticizing the president and the National Democratic Party.

His answer was calibrated to assure the pushy Westerners that such a transformation cannot be completed overnight and that America ought to be careful what it wishes for in Egypt. He reminded us that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has a partner in calling for democratization: the Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt's powerful pro-Sharia Islamic radicals.

Kamal is exactly the sort of reformer the West seems anxious to find. A political-science professor who heads the American Studies program at Cairo University, he is a member of the Shura Council (Egypt's Upper House of Parliament) and the party's powerful General Secretariat. In 2005, he was appointed Secretary of Political Education and Training in the NDP. He is also a major figure in the party's widely hailed "new guard," a faction pushing for greater economic and political liberalization—just so long as it doesn't empower Islamists.

The ninth General Conference of the NDP was marketed as the party's next big step in opening itself up to the modern world, but it felt a little like an Eastern

Bloc nation had hired a team of image consultants. The NDP replaced its usual two-story posters of Mubarak's face with pictures of idealized common Egyptians in hardhats and nurse uniforms. The message: we may still be a dictatorship, but we are a dictatorship of the people. Long harangues about the triumphs of the party and the depredations of its enemies were exchanged for PowerPoint presentations designed to track Egypt's economic growth over the last decade.

But painting a new face on an aging regime isn't easy. Draping the concrete bleachers of Cairo Stadium in black chiffon failed to transform it into a professional venue. And in the VIP lounge, the party served its guests a stomach-churning mix of old and new: mango juice and lukewarm KFC chicken.

The makeover has even bigger challenges: the party still has trouble maintaining the pretense of democracy. On the first day of the convention, leaders scheduled votes on dozens of amendments to the agenda and constitution. The items were called out speedily, "Numbers 23, 42, 43, 50, 51, 56!" But before they were entirely shouted, all those in attendance raised their hands in assent. Before their hands were fully raised, the speaker declared the items passed. A default red checkmark immediately appeared on the projected television screens. Al Jazeera's Arabic headline on the first day: "Farce!"

Economic development was the convention's focus. Despite a 6.9 percent GDP growth rate and direct foreign investments increasing from \$2 billion in 2004 to \$6.1 billion in 2006, Egypt faces an economic crises: nearly a quarter of Egyptians live in poverty and unemployment is rising. The nation's population has doubled in just 30 years and is projected to do the same over the next 30, prompting a minister of finance to push for "the two-child home, a model that is in the interest of Egyptian families and the Egyptian nation." In his closing speech to the convention, the newly re-elected head of the party—and reigning president of Egypt—Hosni Mubarak, imported American rhetoric about "moving from a culture of welfare to work." Al Jazeera's Arabic headline, loosely translated: "Boring!"

The desire to incorporate the nation into the international neoliberal order animates other policy changes. Reform-minded party officials told me that Egypt sought to replace direct foreign aid from the United States with free-trade deals. Already Egypt is increasing its trade profile in the Mediterranean and setting itself up as a manufacturing shop for Europe.

But direct aid is only part of America's investment in Egypt's pro-Western authoritarianism. Since 1979, the U.S. has granted Egypt \$1.3 billion annually in military aid. Owing their livelihood to the NDP's American-financed largesse, the military forms the strongest block of support for Mubarak's government and his crackdowns on the Brotherhood. The ascendance of Islamists into power would mean an immediate end to many military careers spent loitering the streets bumming cigarettes off foreigners. Unfortunately for the NDP, there is a clamor to introduce conditions for this aid.

Yuval Steinitz, a senior Israeli legislator from Likud has urged American senators to freeze \$200 million in military

aid until the State Department certifies that Egypt "has taken concrete and measurable steps to curb police abuses" and "enact a law protecting the independence of the judiciary."

President Mubarak alluded to this effort in his speech to the conference: "We protect Egypt's sovereignty and independence and reject any pressure and conditions, and we refuse any interference in our affairs."

It's not just old-liners who oppose these conditions. Even the exceedingly pro-American Kamal turned dark at their mention, saying that such a move by the United States would be met with a "sharp response" from the government. This reaction would be understandable for reasons of national pride alone, but Kamal believes conditions on aid would help Islamists. Many of Egypt's lawyers are loyal to the Muslim Brotherhood, which retains great popular support in the professional associations. An independent judiciary would be able to halt the NDP efforts to prevent the election of Islamists.

THOUGH THE BROTHERHOOD CANNOT FORM ITS OWN POLITICAL PARTY—RELIGIOUS PARTIES ARE BANNED—ITS MEMBERS CAPTURED 88 SEATS (20 PERCENT) IN PARLIAMENT RUNNING AS UNAFFILIATED CANDIDATES IN 2005.

The NDP cannot help but mix together its self-interest as a ruling party with its justifiable fear that the Muslim Brotherhood would establish a closed Islamic state if allowed to rule. The party faces two choices: impose democratic reform and allow the Brotherhood more power or maintain the status quo and lose legitimacy, thereby granting more power to the Brotherhood.

The NDP is attempting to escape this double-bind by excluding the Brotherhood from Egyptian politics. So far this strategy has proven useless. In 2006, the

government reaffirmed laws that make it a crime to "affront the president of the republic" or insult other organs of the regime. But the Brothers elude government authority by preaching their message in independent mosques and on the Internet.

Though the Brotherhood cannot form its own political party—religious parties are banned—and routinely faces mass arrests and an untrustworthy electoral system, its members captured 88 seats (20 percent) in Parliament running as unaffiliated candidates in 2005. Every new election increases their number, causing Egypt's political elite to wonder whether their unapproved status isn't a boon to them and should be repealed.

Gamal Mubarak embodies the contradictions in Egypt's efforts to enact democratic reform while maintaining party control in the hands of non-Islamists. For the past three years, the president's younger son has been groomed to succeed his father in office. Though his ascent within the party is driven by dynastic concerns, he is billed as a

reformer, part of the "new guard." His affinity for American style-politics is not implausible. He graduated from American University in Cairo and worked for Bank of America while pursuing a business degree.

Whereas Hosni clearly relishes his role as father of the Egyptian people, Gamal wants to be their first modern politician. Whereas the old guard would bully journalists, Gamal smiles and gently deflects their questions and accusations. Hosni models himself on old Soviet leaders; Gamal takes his cues

from slippery and successful pols like Tony Blair. In a closed session, he admits that for democratic reformers, “In this region, what counts is not the first free and fair election, but the second.”

Without ever mentioning the Brotherhood, Gamal and other reformers stress that they “are begging for legitimate competition” in the political arena, defining “legitimate” as non-Islamist. Unfortunately, that competition is not forthcoming. Approved opposition parties only managed to carry 14 seats in the last Parliamentary election, and according to U.S. State Department officials in Egypt, genuinely liberal and democratic parties like the National Democratic Front, whose founders split from the NDP, are “interesting to talk to but politically irrelevant.” The NDF has no elected officials.

Islamists have also been encouraged by the “success” of America’s democratization project in the Middle East. Intransigent anti-Western leaders have gained in Lebanon, Iran, and the Palestinian

this is an important country in the region, a region that is changing very much.”

American efforts at peacemaking are met with a shrug by Gamal Mubarak. “We doubt the U.S. can meet even the low expectation for [the upcoming talks at] Annapolis,” he told private audiences. He couldn’t help sticking the pin in American pretensions. Though he believes Rice was “genuine” in her intentions, he said, this is a “process that has been going nowhere for seven years.”

His desire to be a major figure in the region was on display in his press conference. He alternated between Arabic and fluent English, taking care to give pithy answers and calling on a UPI reporter even though officials had told Western observers that they could not ask him questions. But his party’s basic incompetence seemed to show him up. After Mubarak’s impressive performance, a team of laborers quickly grabbed his podium to return it to the main stage. For all its power in Egypt, the NDP could summon only one lectern for its great assembly.

justice through economic development”—a motif popular among Western watchers of the Third World. But Mubarak’s efforts at persuasion translate into English as ominous imperatives: “The people must be convinced to have fewer children” and “For those who are deserving, subsidies will continue. For others, no.” He spoke in a strange, halting cadence, as if he had learned the rhythms of governance from Soviet patrons but now had to sing the hymns of global capitalism.

His voice booming across Cairo Stadium, the president seemed at pains to demonstrate his strength amid rumors of declining health. If he can last until 2011, his son’s election is nearly assured. If he dies, Egypt may be thrown into a constitutional crisis. Kamal’s hope, expressed after the conference, is that Egypt can continue to negotiate the narrow and dangerous path between authoritarianism and political Islam to democracy.

Cairo itself can tell an observer about the perils that Egypt has survived—and those it still faces. The taxis are 30-year-old Soviet Ladas that require repair every few days. The great majority of housing is composed of state-sponsored projects: great, characterless slabs of concrete placed along the highways, often hiding slums behind them. In alleyways all over the city, men can be found bowing their heads on prayer mats, then getting up to buy dates and mangos. In the hectic bazaar of Khan el-Khalili, merchants give Americans a practiced look that excites pity and fear in equal measure, one that says, “Give me your money, I desperately need it. If you don’t, something bad could happen to you.” Along one alley in downtown Cairo, I ask my cabdriver what some graffiti on the wall said. “Islam is the answer,” he informed me. It sounded like a harmless expression of devotion. It’s also the slogan of the Muslim Brotherhood. ■

ACCORDING TO **U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS** IN EGYPT, GENUINELY LIBERAL AND DEMOCRATIC PARTIES ARE **“INTERESTING TO TALK TO BUT POLITICALLY IRRELEVANT.”**

territories. Hamas’ success in Palestinian elections is a warning to those who encourage free elections without conditions, Egyptian leaders told us. You can have a liberal or a democratic order in the Middle East, but achieving both simultaneously is impossible in the short term.

As an addendum to news coverage about Pakistan’s state of emergency, Secretary Rice’s attempts to increase pressure on Mubarak and the NDP were replayed on Egyptian state-run television: “We are supporting the democratic aspirations of all people. ... People will watch what happens in Egypt, because

And Gamal’s ambitions are obscured by the overwhelming presence of his father, the man who has ruled Egypt since 1981. In the hours before President Mubarak’s speech, the temperature of the city seemed to rise. Shopkeepers ignored the business of haggling and turned up their old televisions. Taxi drivers surveyed the sudden gridlock and sighed. At the stadium, VIPs from Sudan, Chad, and Saudi Arabia lined up in limos and minibuses to pay tribute, as did nearly every diplomat in the country.

The speech itself was long on policy and short on applause lines. The theme was Egypt’s need to “achieve social

Turning Blue

Can Democrats make the Senate filibuster proof?

By W. James Antle III

LAST YEAR, the Republicans barely lost control of the Senate. Come next November, the number of GOP senators might be knocked down to pre-1994 levels. If the prospect of Hillary Clinton in the White House doesn't frighten Republicans enough, they should entertain the new nightmare scenario: President Hillary and a filibuster-proof Democratic Senate.

Such a development would require a remarkable Democratic sweep, but it's not impossible. The 2008 Senate races were always going to be challenging for the Republicans. The GOP, already in the minority, must defend 22 seats to the Democrats' 12. Eight of the Republican incumbents are freshmen, including one interim appointee, while only one Democratic incumbent is in his first term. So far the Republicans have five retirements, the Democrats none. The open-seat gap between the two parties is the largest in 50 years.

Republicans must defend four seats in states that John Kerry won in 2004, and four in states where Democrats swept key races in 2006. Factor in Republican scandals—from Larry Craig's wide stance to the FBI's widening investigation of Ted Stevens—and candidate recruitment woes, and the Democratic field advantage begins to look quite formidable. Even the red states aren't always safe.

Virginia: No state better illustrates the GOP's precarious situation than the Old Dominion. Virginia, the only Southern state to support Gerald Ford over Jimmy Carter in 1976, hasn't voted for a

Democratic presidential candidate since going all the way with LBJ in 1964. State politics caught up with Virginians' presidential preferences during the 1990s. Yet the commonwealth is now trending Democratic, with the northern Virginia suburbs leading the way.

Early polls show Virginia surprisingly competitive in the 2008 presidential race. Democrats have won the last two gubernatorial elections, a U.S. Senate race in 2006, and control of the state senate. With the retirement of Republican Sen. John Warner, they are likely to pick up the other Senate seat. Popular Democratic former governor Mark Warner (no relation to the current senator) beats his Republican predecessor Jim Gilmore 53 percent to 37 percent in the latest Rasmussen poll. Northern Virginia Congressman Tom Davis, a moderate Republican, took a look at the race and passed.

Gilmore's national stock plummeted after a brief, disastrous bid for the GOP presidential nomination. Nothing in that bizarre episode inspires much confidence that he will be able to trump Warner's political talent and cross-partisan appeal. To lose this race, Warner would probably have to be filmed using an ethnic slur to describe a volunteer for his opponent's campaign. Fortunately, no Virginia politician would do something so foolish.

New Hampshire: Long the Republicans' last bastion in New England, in 2006 the Granite State bore a closer resemblance to neighboring Massachusetts. Democrats picked up both congressional seats, retained the governor-

ship, and won both houses of the state legislature for the first time since 1874. New Hampshire has voted Republican only once in the last four presidential elections. This stunning realignment creates a very challenging environment for Republican Sen. John Sununu's re-election bid.

Democratic former governor Jeanne Shaheen is seeking a rematch. Shaheen lost the 2002 Senate race to Sununu by three points. She probably would have won the seat if Sununu hadn't launched a successful primary challenge against GOP Sen. Bob Smith. Shaheen has good reason to hope for a different outcome this time around: an October University of New Hampshire poll showed her ahead by 16 points; SurveyUSA has her up by 11. Only Rasmussen has the race relatively close, with Shaheen leading by five points.

Sununu has occasionally shown independence from the Bush administration, such as when he became the first Republican senator to call for Atty. Gen. Alberto Gonzales's resignation, but perhaps not enough for the independents who are now a plurality of New Hampshire voters—his approval rating is dangerously below the 50-percent mark. The race will pit the Sununu family name against the Democratic brand.

Colorado: Another Republican retirement in a purple state has created a strong Democratic pickup opportunity. Sen. Wayne Allard limited himself to two terms and announced earlier this year that he would honor his pledge. While Colorado has traditionally voted Republican, like much of the interior West, it

has recently been trending Democratic. Allard eked out 51 percent in both 1996 and 2002. Democrats took Colorado's other Senate seat in 2004, while George W. Bush was narrowly carrying the state, and the governorship in 2006.

Republicans tried to recruit former governor Bill Owens, former attorney general John Suthers, and retired Denver Broncos quarterback John Elway to run for the seat, but they all declined. Former congressman Scott McInnis dropped out of the race in May. That leaves the GOP with former congressman Bob Schaffer, a solid conservative who lost the 2004 Senate primary to brewing magnate Pete Coors—who in turn lost the seat to the Democrats.

Congressman Mark Udall is the likely Democratic candidate. A November SurveyUSA poll shows the race fairly close, with Udall leading Schaffer 48 percent to 41 percent. But Udall leads among independents by a 5-to-3 margin, and he may receive a boost when the Democrats hold their 2008 national convention in Denver.

New Mexico: With longtime Republican Sen. Pete Domenici retiring, the GOP will be forced to defend another open seat in a Western state. Albuquerque Mayor Martin Chavez is the likeliest Democratic candidate. Two Republican House members, Reps. Heather Wilson and Steve Pearce, have announced they will seek their party's nomination.

Pearce is well regarded, but some analysts argue that he is too conservative to win statewide. The more moderate Wilson is seen as Domenici's protégé, but she won re-election to her House seat last year by just 0.4 percent of the vote. Depending on whom you ask, this demonstrates that Wilson is either polarizing or capable of winning tough elections. A poll commissioned by *Roll Call* showed Chavez narrowly beating both Republicans. Yet if Bill Richardson

dropped out of the Democratic presidential race and ran for the Senate instead, he would be the overwhelming favorite.

Minnesota: Remember when the state that gave us Hubert Humphrey, Eugene McCarthy, and Paul Wellstone—the only state that voted against Ronald Reagan in 1984—was supposed to be trending Republican? It seems like a distant memory. In 2006, then-Congressman Mark Kennedy, who was supposed to be one of the GOP's best chances to pick up a Senate seat, won just 38 percent of the vote—the worst showing for a Republican senatorial candidate in Minnesota since World War II. Minnesota's popular Republican Gov. Tim Pawlenty was re-elected by just 0.1 percent.

GOP Sen. Norm Coleman was one of his party's 2002 success stories. Narrowly trailing Senator Wellstone before his untimely death in plane crash, Coleman unexpectedly came back to beat former vice president Walter Mondale by three points. Now some polls show him only slightly ahead of comedian and liberal radio talk-show host Al Franken, the Democratic frontrunner. Franken aims to prove he's good enough and people like him, while Coleman can't believe he might lose to that guy.

A recent Rasmussen poll shows the race gets even tighter if the Democrats nominate their straight man, attorney Mike Ciresi, who Coleman beats 46 percent 43 percent. But in a state that elected Jesse Ventura governor, the funny man can't be counted out. Coleman, himself a former Democrat, has tried to triangulate on Iraq, opposing both the surge and congressional timetables for withdrawal.

Oregon: Incumbent Republican Sen. Gordon Smith is conservative on abortion, liberal on gay issues, and supports redeployment from Iraq. Oregon is Democratic, but frequently elects such unorthodox Republican senators. Polls

show him leading Democratic state Speaker Jeff Merkley by nearly 10 points, but consistently below 50 percent. Smith was first elected with just 49 percent of the vote in 1996.

Maine: No longer the bellwether state it once was in presidential elections, Maine will be decisive in determining whether the Democrats merely pad their majority slightly or dominate the Senate. Incumbent Sen. Susan Collins is the kind of moderate Republican Maine favors—fellow senator Olympia Snowe was re-elected with 74 percent in 2006. Collins's likely opponent is six-term Democratic Congressman Tom Allen.

A SurveyUSA poll showed Collins leading Allen 55 percent to 38 percent, suggesting this won't be an easy Democratic pickup (though keeping Collins while losing conservatives won't help GOP filibuster efforts much). Allen no doubt plans to challenge her on the war. He might get some unintentional assistance on this from liberal hawk Joe Lieberman, who has pledged to campaign for Collins. As Maine goes...

If the Democrats only win the races where they are now ahead, they will be one seat away from where they were before the 1994 elections. They need to win just two more for the 57 seats Democrats held when Bill Clinton took office. To get to 60, they will have to put states like Kentucky, Idaho, and Nebraska in play, a very tall order—and that's assuming there are no Republican pickups in red states like Louisiana, where Sen. Mary Landrieu is vulnerable, and South Dakota, where Sen. Tim Johnson's health has been poor.

If Republicans can avoid President Clinton and nearly 60 Democratic senators, they will feel like they've won a victory of sorts. ■

W. James Antle III is associate editor of The American Spectator.

Smells Like Team Spirit

Even in a superstar age, high-school football is still about community.

By Steve Sailer

EACH YEAR ROUGHLY 1.2 million boys play and 100,000 men coach high-school football. It's one of those social phenomena that is so big that nobody thinks much about it. Yet prep football—by uneasily combining the norms of the middle of the last century, which seemed in the 1940s to be the Century of the Common Man, with our own Century of the Superstar, in which many watch but only a chosen few perform—offers a window into America's past and future.

The new age of elitist high-school football was epitomized by the nationally televised game played Sept. 15 between *USA Today's* #2-ranked squad, the well-drilled Dragons from exurban Southlake Carroll, winner of three straight Texas championships, and the star-packed #1-ranked Bulls of inner city Miami Northwestern, the 2006 Florida titleholders. Yet this type of made-for-television exhibition remains more the exception than the rule. At least compared to basketball, high-school football hasn't much changed culturally since Paul Brown was coaching the Massillon, Ohio Tigers to glory in the 1930s. For instance, a huge crowd of close to 20,000 fans showed up Nov. 2 for the 73rd meeting of Garfield and Roosevelt, two all-Latino high schools in East Los Angeles that seldom send players to college programs. This "East L.A. Classic" remains one of the countless local football rivalries that thrive despite the homogenizing dominance of the national media.

High-school football continues to be a repository of many of the authority-respecting and communal virtues of the WWII-winning Greatest Generation. On

the field, America's old struggle between nurture and nature—between the faith that winners can be molded out of the common folk versus the ever spreading suspicion that success is mostly in the genes and in private tutoring—can still battle it out on relatively equal terms.

Foreigners have long been astounded by the extravagant number of players on American football teams and by the expensive armor in which they are encased. Yet because only the most carefully rehearsed teamwork can prevent chaos on the gridiron, their numbers and anonymity have helped retard the growth of superstaritis

Basketball, with its fewer and more recognizable players, can be dominated by one or two stars freelancing. Indeed, successful coaches increasingly emphasize recruiting genetic anomalies over training normal kids. USC basketball coach Tim Floyd recently promised full scholarships to two eighth graders!

Sacramento-area basketball coach Brian McCormick lamented his sport's decline:

Colleges hire the best recruiters, not coaches. High school players enhance their recruitment not by improving their skills, but by being more exposed. And, even youth coaches ignore skill development, focusing on attracting new players with better skills or athleticism. None of it makes sense, but it is consistent. From the top down and the bottom up, recruiting ruins American basketball, ruining the game year by year.

The overall quality of basketball appears to have suffered, especially on offense, a trend lowlighted by the ignominy of a team of top NBA players losing at the 2004 Olympics to Argentina, Lithuania, and Puerto Rico. In contrast, most prep football offensive records are no more than 15 years old, suggesting that teams are executing better than ever.

Even the scandals besetting high-school football can sometimes be redolent of an older America. Shedding light on what one coach was willing to do to win, an October report by a retired federal judge looked into the goings on at Hoover High School, winner of four straight Alabama crowns and the subject of the 2006-2007 MTV reality show "Two-a-Days." Located in an affluent, 88-percent white suburb of Birmingham, Hoover's football booster club raises \$300,000 annually.

The controversy began with a complaint by a math teacher, with the wonderful name of Forrest Quattlebaum, that the Algebra II grade of senior football hero Josh Chapman had been "rounded up" by an administrator so the 280-pounder would be eligible to play this season for the University of Alabama Crimson Tide. According to the report, Hoover head coach Rush Propst makes an official salary of \$93,000, takes in another \$15,000-27,000 running football summer camps on public-school property, earns \$3,500 from a local TV show, and receives a new pickup truck from a car dealer every 60,000 miles. It's enough to support "a not-so-secret second family."

It's all quite shocking, but even Propst's rake-off is pocket lint compared to University of Alabama coach Nick Saban's contract for \$32 million over eight years. In today's Big Money America, coaching high-school football is a relic of the old middle-class nation. Despite the sins of the Propsts, the game mostly remains endearingly small time. Outside of Texas, most football coaches are also schoolteachers. For example, Florida public-school head coaches get a bonus of \$3,000-5,500 per year over their teachers' salaries in return for working 100-hour weeks during the season.

Why do so many, including the vast array of assistant coaches, put in so much effort? Primarily, for the love of the game. Good coaches can still mold a random selection of boys into a fine football team.

Little of the political correctness that infests the rest of the educational system is allowed to touch the sport. Unlike, say, English or math, football is just too important for any such tomfoolery. It remains a barely disguised war game, in which combat platoons try to conquer enemy territory.

Despite the pervasive push for gender-equality in school sports, girls mostly keep to their traditional place in football—on the sidelines, in short skirts, cheering the boys on. Indeed, the numbers of cheerleaders at some schools have exploded as administrations have, amazingly enough, responded wisely to the differences between boys and girls. While masculine competition can build formidably functional hierarchies, feminine forms of competition, such as cheerleader tryouts, too often generate cliquishness and backstabbing, as personified by the notorious 1991 Texas Cheerleader Mom Murder case. So some schools have stopped picking the six prettiest and perkier applicants; they just let every girl who wants to be a

cheerleader be one. And a lot of girls want to. At one predominantly Latino school I visited, there were about 50 official cheerleaders.

The book, movie, and TV show *Friday Night Lights* has made Odessa's passion for high-school football famous, as its athletes strive for scholarships that will get them off the God-forsaken plains of the Texas Panhandle. But high-school football mania is hardly restricted to the hinterlands. My old high school, Notre Dame in Sherman Oaks, California, just over the Hollywood Hills from Beverly Hills, has built a football machine since it went 3-6 the year I graduated. In my day, the game program was a mimeographed sheet listing the players' numbers. Now it is a glossy magazine 236 pages thick, square-bound like *Vogue*, crammed with ads congratulating the school's 6'5", 228-pound quarterback.

Not surprisingly, as Notre Dame H.S. teams triumphed on the field, donations poured in, with superb new buildings replacing the plywood shack in which I took many classes. You don't have to be good at football to rake in gifts these days, as Harvard's \$34.9 billion endowment shows, but it definitely helps for a school to be good at something. As George S. Patton observed, "Americans love a winner."

High-school football also displays some modern virtues, such as a reasonably good relationship between whites and blacks, based on the common goal of victory and an informal division of labor. Football mania builds social solidarity, which is helpful in getting things done, especially in multiracial communities.

The missing pieces of the puzzle have been Hispanic athletes. Latinos make up 20 percent of public-school students, but they don't make much of a splash in the sports pages. For example, David Lopez, a 6'3", 225-pound linebacker at Garfield, is expected to be only the second participant in the East L.A. Clas-

sic during this decade to earn a Division I-A scholarship. In contrast, last year's graduating class of 149 at Oaks Christian in posh Westlake Village, California saw 11 players receive free rides to Division I-A football factories.

One reason that Mexican-Americans don't compete more evenly with white athletes is due to the early specialization and intensive training that middle-class youngsters now undergo. Today, when tennis pros typically grow up at costly boarding academies, it seems unimaginable that the greatest player in the world from the mid-'50s into the early-'60s was an ex-juvenile delinquent from East L.A. named Pancho Gonzales, a public-courts player who never took a lesson.

There used to be more room for individual initiative, but children are increasingly dependent on their parents. The *USA Today* 2006 Offensive Player of the Year, Oaks Christian's Jimmy Clausen, was raised to be a quarterback by his father, an insurance executive. Two older brothers had started at quarterback for the University of Tennessee. All three brothers were kept out of kindergarten until age 6 and repeated sixth grade, so they were 19 instead of 17 as high-school seniors. From seventh grade onward, Jimmy worked ten hours per week during the off-season with his private quarterback coach. He arrived at the press conference to announce his signing with the University of Notre Dame in a Hummer limo—though lying behind the miserable 2007 Fighting Irish's porous offensive line has been a less glitzy experience for him.

Although there have been periodic calls by black leaders and intellectuals for the community to de-emphasize football and basketball in favor of studying, there can be intense pressure on suburban middle-class black youths to play, since coaches often see themselves as dependent upon their schools' small number of black students. Many of the

best high-school teams are built around a mass of white spear carriers along with a few black standouts at running back, wide receiver, and at defensive positions where speed is at a premium. In September's Texas-Florida showdown, the tailback of the almost all-white Southlake Carroll Dragons, for example, was Tre Newton, son of the popular retired Dallas Cowboys lineman Nate Newton.

Southlake, a prosperous 89-percent white exurb northwest of the Dallas-Fort Worth Airport, illustrates one of the less discussed trends of recent decades. Even as African-Americans now make up half of Division I-A football players and two-thirds of the NFL, predominantly white high-school squads prosper. In much of the country, the prep game is ruled either by Catholic schools, such as De La Salle in Concord, California, which won 151 straight games from 1992-2005, or by exurban public schools, such as Canyon, north of Los Angeles, which last year upset nationally #1-ranked De La Salle to win California's big schools championship. The white team with a black back is so common that it was a surprise when Canyon triumphed with an Italian-American tailback named J.J. DiLuigi, who scored 82 touchdowns in two seasons.

These mostly white teams often win by doing the little things right, such as placekicking. My old high school was carried to its first championship in 1994 by 11 field goals in four playoff games from Chris Sailer (no relation), including a last-second game winner from 58 yards in the rain. Sailer's now a professional placekicking guru, and under his guidance, Notre Dame's last two kickers each connected from at least 56 yards.

In contrast, Washington D.C. public high schools, whose students seldom play soccer, are dogged by inept kicking. Journalist Dave McKenna described a

game between Woodson and the otherwise powerful Dunbar: "The teams combined for 11 touchdowns, but just one kicked an extra point that day. Woodson also had a 3-yard punt and several horrendous kickoffs, including one in the fourth quarter that actually went backward." Many inner city black kids seem to view practicing kicking as a nerdy white activity incompatible with keepin' it real.

Southlake Carroll's opponent, Miami Northwestern, located in the Liberty City slum, is a 90-percent black school, with 66 percent of its students getting subsidized lunches. Only eight players had ever been on an airplane before flying to Dallas for the big game. The school is famous for "athleticism," a term that today is more or less synonymous with "fast" and "black." Northwestern epitomizes the stereotype of southeastern speed.

The school is recovering from a notorious brouhaha. Early in the 2006 season, the 18-year-old star running back was discovered in a school bathroom with a naked 14-year-old girl. The young lady's mother demanded that charges be pressed, which the school administration assured her would happen, though they never quite mentioned the incident to the police. Finally, the angry mother went to the cops herself, and the tailback was charged two days before the state championship game. Yet contrary to policy, he was allowed to play, rushing for 157 yards in the victory.

Similarly, in September, when Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton led thousands of demonstrators in a march on the small town of Jena, Louisiana to protest supposed racism in the treatment of six black high-school students accused of beating unconscious then stomping the body of a white schoolmate, the assembled national media got the story almost 180 degrees backward. We weren't wit-

nessing a revival of the Emmett Till Era of lynchings, as the pundits insisted, but another example of the O.J. Simpson Age of stars athletes whose off-field misdeeds are excused until they finally go too far.

The Jena Six hadn't been despised outcasts: they were the best football players in a gridiron-obsessed small town. Mychal Bell, the only one of the Six tried so far, was an All-State junior who scored 18 touchdowns in the 2006 season. A local minister, Eddie Thompson, explained, "For the most part, coaches and other adults have prevented them from being held accountable for the reign of terror they have presided over in Jena." As Abbey Brown wrote in the *Alexandria-Pineville Town Talk*: "Bell was adjudicated—the juvenile equivalent to a conviction—of battery Sept. 2 [2006] and criminal damage to property Sept. 3. ... A few days later, on Sept. 8, Bell rushed 12 times for 108 yards and scored three touchdowns."

With Miami Northwestern, fortunately, the problem of covering up for stars was recognized. In the ensuing scandal, the coach, the principal, and 19 others were fired, and new principal Charles Hankerson has instituted stricter discipline. The Northwestern Bulls reportedly behaved well on their trip to Texas, where they beat the Carroll Dragons 29-21.

For all high-school football's troubles handling 21st-century vices, the glass, while clearly part-empty, remains far more than half-full. No doubt the sport, like most other aspects of American life, will slowly continue down the path blazed by basketball toward an ever-worsening case of Superstar Syndrome. But the deep-seated conservatism of the game and the sheer numbers involved mean that prep football will long endure as one of the best ways our culture has left to inculcate the old American talent for teamwork. ■

Arts & Letters

FILM

[*No Country for Old Men*]

Take the Money and Run

By Steve Sailer

DEVELOPING VIDEO GAMES is consuming more and more of today's creative talent, with little benefit to show for it in the broader culture. Traditional art forms such as poetry, music, and painting tended to inspire each other forward in a virtuous cycle, but video games, a solitary vice, have been a cultural black hole. Game-inspired films, for instance, have mostly failed because watching a movie star frenetically shoot bad guys is missing the point of playing, which is to shoot them yourself.

Finally, Joel and Ethan Coen, the most gifted of the many brother-act *frauteurs* making films today, have figured out how to bring the pleasures of a problem-solving first-person shooter game to the movie theater. Strangely enough, they've done it in their first literary adaptation, a faithful rendition of *No Country for Old Men*, the 2005 novel by Cormac McCarthy, an acclaimed master of American prose.

Despite the 74-year-old McCarthy's august reputation, his book is a surprisingly high-energy art-pulp Western. It's essentially a chase featuring two highly competent antagonists: a West Texas good old boy who, while antelope hunting, finds \$2 million among the bullet-

riddled bodies of Mexican drug runners, tracked by a relentless killer hired to retrieve the money.

Josh Brolin plays the Pac Man being pursued, a trailer-park protagonist with the blue-collar likeability of character actor John C. Reilly and the technical resourcefulness of TV hero MacGyver. A skilled welder, he's smarter than he looks but not quite ruthless enough. He could have made a clean exit with the \$2 million, but instead, after telling his wife, "I'm fixin to go do something dumbern hell but I'm goin' anyways," returns to save the last survivor of the drug deal shootout he had stumbled upon.

This act of mercy unleashes upon his trail a pitiless "Ghost," a hit man played by Spanish actor Javier Bardem as a Terminator-style juggernaut. Like Schwarzenegger's cyborg, he even performs surgery upon himself after a shootout.

The Coen brothers have discovered that the paradoxical key to making a video-game movie is to slow down the action, allowing the viewer to think along with the hero and villain. Not since the sniper scene that makes up the second half of Stanley Kubrick's Vietnam film "Full Metal Jacket" has a movie played fairer with the audience in detailing the physical puzzles confronting the characters. How, for example, could you best hide two cubic feet of \$100 bills in your motel room? And how could your enemy find such well-concealed money?

I know I've seen a well-crafted film when I walk out of the theater and still feel like I'm living in the movie. Leaving the amnesia thriller "Memento," for example, I was convinced I'd never remember where I'd parked my car. With "No Country," this post-movie syn-

drome lasted longer than I can ever recall. Even the next night, every car that passed me on a quiet street seemed an eerie, sinister harbinger of sudden violence.

"No Country" inverts numerous elements from "Fargo." The crime in that Coen film, for instance, was solved by a wonderfully unlikely sheriff, a polite and very pregnant Frances McDormand. Here, however, Tommy Lee Jones is typecast as the archetypal Texas sheriff, yet he proves frustratingly ineffectual at stopping the mayhem. Thus the plot winds up as anticlimactically as most video-game plays, with the (male) viewer wanting to try it again so the hero won't make the same mistakes twice.

For reasons I don't fully understand (and am not sure I really want to think about), most of us guys, no matter how blameless our lives, enjoy doing some contingency planning about how we'd handle it if we ever had to climb into that white Bronco and make a run for the border. Thus many men hated the great chick flick "Thelma and Louise" less for its supposed feminism than for how dopily Geena Davis and Susan Sarandon let their feelings botch up their escape from Arkansas to Mexico. I quickly worked out for them an itinerary for their getaway over the Rio Grande to Matamoros, but they weren't equally serious about route selection and ended up in northern Arizona, where they fell, deservedly, into the Grand Canyon.

You can rest assured that the hero and villain in "No Country for Old Men," a guy movie if there ever was one, wouldn't miss Mexico by 500 miles. ■

Rated R for strong graphic violence and some language.

BOOKS

[Day of Empire: How Hyperpowers Rise to Global Dominance—And Why They Fall, Amy Chua, Doubleday; 432 pages]

No Tolerance for Human Nature

By John Derbyshire

FOUR YEARS AGO, Amy Chua published a striking book entitled *World on Fire* in which she drew our attention to an important contradiction inherent in the globalization project. Globalization, she argued, disproportionately benefits “market-dominant minorities” like the Jewish “oligarchs” of Yeltsin’s Russia or her own relatives, the overseas Chinese of southeast Asia. Globalization is thus at odds with democratization, which favors the less entrepreneurial “sons of the soil” and excites ethnic resentments.

In *Day of Empire: How Hyperpowers Rise to Global Dominance—And Why They Fall*, Chua continues her exploration of the shifting currents of modernity. Taking for granted that the present-day U.S. is a “hyperpower,” overwhelmingly dominant in a unipolar world, she ransacks history for clues as to how such powers rise and fall and what lessons we might learn therefrom.

Her main thesis is that peoples advance to hyperpower status by practicing tolerance toward the foreigners who, either by conquest or immigration, come within their scope. Having embraced masses of foreigners in these ways, the metropolitan power needs to come up with some kind of “glue” (the author’s word) to bond them to itself—to turn subjection into allegiance. Hyperpowers of the past have had varying degrees of success in the devising and applying of this “glue.” All declined at last—became unstuck, as it were—

because the original spirit of tolerance and inclusion was lost.

This thesis is illustrated by a parade of hyperpowers: the empires of Cyrus and Alexander; Rome, of course; China’s Tang dynasty; the Mongols, the Ottomans, Mings and Moghuls; and the maritime empires of Spain, Holland, and Britain. Each, according to our author, rose to dominance by enlisting foreign expertise and tolerating foreign customs and faiths. Some developed bonding “glue”: Roman citizenship, the trans-ethnic Islam of the Ottomans, Hellenic culture. Others did not:

The Tang policy of strategic tolerance meant that the empire never tried to impose a Han Chinese identity on its non-Chinese subjects. As a result, no common political, linguistic, or cultural “glue” bound “barbarians” and Chinese together in the sprawling Tang Empire. On the contrary, even in the early eighth century [the Emperor] found himself ruling over large numbers of distinct, fiercely independent communities with no loyalty or even goodwill toward their Chinese overlords.

I must say I found something deeply unconvincing about this whole argument. Some of it struck me as just tautological. A nation becomes a hyperpower,

it might alert the enslaved to how numerous they were.

Just so at the other end of the argument. Rome fell, Amy Chua tells us, “when it let in peoples that it failed to assimilate, either because they were unassimilable or because their culture and habits exceeded the limits of Roman tolerance,” which is to say, “strategic tolerance” works, except when it doesn’t. Well, duh.

The whole enterprise also has something Procrustean about it. *Here is a region- or world-spanning hyperpower. Let’s see if I can jam it into my tolerance-glueyness-intolerance template.* Other than the fact that they interacted with a lot of foreigners, what exactly do Achaemenid Persia and the 17th-century Dutch empire have in common? Not much that I can see or that Chua could persuade me of.

Nor is the path from tolerance to intolerance persuasively described. I am sure Chua is right to say that an 18th-century Englishman in India was more likely to take an Indian wife than was his counterpart in 1920, but that was because the first was a solitary merchant adventurer far from home comforts, while the second was a salaried employee of the Crown inhabiting a bungalow in the home-from-home “civil lines” among straitlaced and vigilant superiors and marriageable memsahibs.

HER MAIN THESIS IS THAT **PEOPLES ADVANCE TO HYPERPOWER STATUS BY PRACTICING TOLERANCE TOWARD THE FOREIGNERS WHO, EITHER BY CONQUEST OR IMMIGRATION, COME WITHIN THEIR SCOPE.**

the author tells us, by tolerantly incorporating lots of other nations or peoples. As opposed to what? Well, I suppose the emerging hyperpower might just massacre its subject peoples or enslave them, and in fact most of her examples did both things, if selectively. The Mongols were notorious for their wanton massacres, while a proposal that Roman slaves should wear a distinguishing tunic was scotched on the grounds that

No real change in metropolitan attitudes was involved. If anything, the British of 1920 were more receptive to “diversity” than those of 1750. Ask a Jew or a Catholic.

I don’t think, either, that Chua pays sufficient attention to two issues that ought always be near the front of one’s mind when discussing these issues of tolerance and “diversity.” One is the matter of numbers, the other of race.

As far as numbers are concerned, the author only shows awareness of the issue when it suits her. A key word here is “unassimilable,” as in that quote above about Roman decline. Some of the peoples the Romans failed to assimilate—the author has the Hellenized East and Germanic North especially in mind—were simply unassimilable. The disjunctive “or” suggests that “their culture and habits” exceeding “the limits of Roman tolerance” was only part of the problem. What was the rest? Surely, their sheer numbers.

Much later in the book, when she gets around to prescriptions for the present-day United States, Chua lays into immigration restrictionists:

Time and again, past world-dominant powers have fallen precisely when their core groups turned intolerant, reasserting their ‘true’ or ‘pure’ identity and adopting

exclusionary policies toward ‘unassimilable’ groups. From this point of view, attempts to demonize immigrants or to attribute America’s success to ‘Anglo-Protestant’ virtues is not only misleading ... but dangerous.

Note that the word “unassimilable” has acquired quotation marks at some point in the 277 pages between Imperial Rome and George W. Bush’s America. The target in this later selection is Samuel Huntington, whose 2004 book *Who Are We?* is regarded by Chua as wrong-headedly nativistic.

But what exactly makes a group unassimilable (or “unassimilable”)? A key determinant is simply its size. No sane person would argue that a thousand or ten thousand Somalis, Mexicans, or Chinese are unassimilable in today’s America. Ten million is a different matter, a very different matter. That is Samuel Huntington’s entire point. Probably many Romans felt the same way about Goths. They were right to do so, as events proved.

And then, of course, there is the matter of race. Our author is mighty aggrieved by any program of national or racial purity. She blames the swift demise of the mid-20th-century German and Japanese hegemonies on racial exclusivism and suggests that the ethnocentric obsessions of the Chinese will prevent their rising to hyperpower status in the 21st century. Fair enough, though I think there is more to be said in both cases.

That a perfectly unqualified racial inclusiveness can be the basis for an enduring and stable society is not, however, proven. Certainly none of Chua’s historical examples proves it. All of them, of course, included individuals of many races, but here again the issue is one of numbers. To be sure, the Ottomans and the Moghuls, both of originally north Asian stock, did rule big numbers of quite different peoples. If true assimilation had occurred in either case, however, Lawrence of Arabia would have had no ethnocentric Arabs

to command, and we should presumably have been spared the grisly partition of British India and the three consequent subcontinental wars. The British and Dutch tried their best with multiracialism, but the present condition of ex-British Africa (not to mention, some might add uncharitably, ex-British Britain) and recent ructions in the Netherlands suggest less than unqualified success.

Chua would put these problems down to an absence of “glue.” But what “glue” can bond peoples who, as we are slowly coming to understand, exhibit intractable—yes, possibly unassimilable—group-statistical differences in matters of behavior and personality? Do we actually know of any such “glue”? This book offers no evidence that we do. Will American citizenship do the trick? It did with the Irish, Italians, Poles, and Jews, but that just takes us back to the matter of race, and to Rodney King’s famous question.

At the end of this book, as at the end of her previous one, Chua appeals for more openness, tolerance, and generosity of spirit. Well, yea to all that. It is hard not to conclude from the preceding chapters in *Day of Empire*, though, that settled populations with a strong sense of collective identity cannot for long practice unlimited tolerance. Nor can subject peoples for long restrain their resentment at subjection—and this is true whether their subjection is physical, imposed by imperial conquest, or merely cultural, “imposed” (as they see it) indirectly by the machinations of distant superpowers and multinational corporations.

Human nature is what it is. If we do not accept its finitude calmly, and learn to work sanely and humanely with it instead of against it, it will bring us to ruin at last, as surely as empires must fall. ■

John Derbyshire is a contributing editor of National Review and the author of, most recently, Unknown Quantity: A Real and Imaginary History of Algebra.

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[*Wonderful Tonight: George Harrison, Eric Clapton, and Me, Pattie Boyd with Penny Junor, Harmony Books, 336 pages*]

All She Needs is Love

By Marian Kester Coombs

Her Majesty's a pretty nice girl
But she doesn't have a lot to say. ...
I wanna tell her that I love her a lot
But I've got to get a belly full of wine.
Her Majesty's a pretty nice girl
Some day I'm gonna make her mine...

—Paul McCartney, 1970

MEMBERS OF MY GENERATION can tell you exactly where they were the moment they first heard John F. Kennedy had been assassinated and the moment they first heard “I Want to Hold Your Hand.” The same day JFK’s motorcade came to grief in Dealey Plaza, the Beatles’ second album was released in the UK. Within weeks, it was embraced stateside as *Meet the Beatles*, and the Baby Boomers’ most enduring love affair began.

It’s hard to overstate how the shock-trauma of Kennedy’s murder affected Americans born at mid-century. No other event, not even the horrors of the Vietnam War, so deranged the course of our development. This statement is melodramatic, and so was the event: what on earth was a child raised in the calm, ordered, idealized world of the late ’50s and early ’60s supposed to make of the president of the United States suddenly blown to bits at high noon on a public street with his glamorous, pink-clad first lady at his side? Such things were not supposed to happen.

The conspiracy angle didn’t occur to us until years later. By then the damage, compounded by Boomer narcissism, exceptionalism, and sheer numerousness, had been done. And not only to us: the punk band Dead Kennedys, of the

late ’70s, said their name was “meant to call attention” to the fact that “the Kennedy assassinations torpedoed the American Dream. America growing bigger, better! Out in space! Bigger cars! Movie-star president and his gorgeous wife! Kaboom! The balance tilts.”

The Beatles had made it onto American radio earlier in 1963 and had experienced the usual frustrating fate of British acts that tried to cross the Pond. After the assassination, though, as Pattie Boyd recounts in her wistful, prettified memoir *Wonderful Tonight*, U.S. interest in the group detonated into Beatlemania, taking the Fab Four by surprise.

The Beatles were not just exceptionally talented and winsome performers but a phenomenon in the sense of a marvel or wonder: a unifying force, a soul-poultice that came along at precisely the right time with an anodyne effect upon the seared psyche of a generation. In a word, joy. To this day, the mere thought of the Beatles—like the thought of Ronald Reagan—makes me smile.

As with CIA agents, there’s no such thing as a former Beatlemaniac. So I can say without embarrassment that I knew Pattie Boyd’s story long before I opened her book. Her own phrasing (or whoever’s—only her ghostwriter knows for sure) was all that remained to check out. Those hoping for sensational new glimpses of the famous Harrison-Boyd-Clapton “love triangle” will not find them here, alas. Even so, Eric Clapton rushed out his own autobiography within a few months of his ex-wife’s. His view of the seduction is simpler and more mundane than hers: for him it was a function of his out-of-control, drug-addled persona, while for her it was a flattering battle for possession of a latter-day Helen.

Patricia Boyd seemed like a pretty nice girl, and that’s just what she was—bourgeois almost to a fault. When George Harrison fell for her at first sight on the set of “A Hard Day’s Night,” she at first refused to go out with him because she had “a steady boyfriend of two years” and “an old-fashioned view of

romance—that it meant fidelity.” As Clapton later told her in one of many importunate letters, “you are the only one I can truly rely on for strength and cheer.” In the drug-, sex- and ego-crazed world of rock’n’roll, she was a rock of a higher order, a bastion of normalcy amid the chaos, a steel English Rose. She served this purpose first for Harrison and then for Clapton, his close friend. The subtitle says it all: “My life with ...” Pattie, born in 1944, belonged to a female generation still bred to be help-meets, for better or for worse. Sex, drugs and rock’n’roll (drugs were less of a problem than The Drink, as it turned out) were not so much her jones as her cross to bear.

One doesn’t read a rock memoir for accounts of Guitar Gods ranting over not having dinner on the table on time, yet this was the quotidian reality of life with George and Eric. When the Beatles toured, wives and girlfriends were forbidden to accompany the entourage. (If only Brian Epstein had still been alive, he’d have made short work of darling Yoko’s limpet-like attachment to John—at least that is every Beatle fan’s fantasy.) And when Clapton toured, Pattie would be frozen out by the “blokes,” so she’d soon decamp. Of course, she enjoyed glamorous moments, at parties and openings and on vacation, but it’s touching to see how prim and proper and, yes, bourgeois she remained as all around her seemed to crash and burn with an intoxicating flame.

Pattie served gladly at the altar of her husbands’ creativity, an altar at which she herself worshipped, but she proved to be more than an artist’s mate. Like her counterparts Marianne Faithfull, Nico, and Anita Pallenberg (who did crash and burn), she rose to the estate of Muse, inspiring several of George’s and Eric’s best love songs. If Pattie was no Maud Gonne or Lou Andreas-Salome or Alma Schindler Mahler Gropius Werfel (of Tom Lehrer’s immortal “Which of your magical wands / Got you Gustav and Walter and Franz?”), neither were her consorts Yeats or Nietzsche or Mahler.

Patricia Boyd and (ultimately five) siblings and half-siblings were the cast-offs of a deeply troubled, childish mother and her two morose and vacant husbands. They were "brought up" in the white-mischievous world of colonial Kenya on the money of her mother's family and then drop-kicked at vulnerable ages back to the "home country" where, sketchily educated, they were knocked about from one "living situation" to the next for years until they could escape. "We didn't see him much because he was always rushing off" fairly summarizes the men in Pattie's life. It's a guilty pleasure to see how dysfunctional a family could be long before our own era—and inspirational to see how a resilient survivor personality like Pattie Boyd's deals with the crazy hand she's been dealt.

Beauty rears its ugly head, of course: there would be no "Wonderful Tonight" without Pattie's long blonde hair, cornflower-blue eyes, neoteny (the retention of such juvenile characteristics as large, widely-spaced eyes), and diastema (that adorable little space between the front teeth that drove director Les Blank, for example, so mad he made a film in 1987 called "Gap-Toothed Women" to celebrate it). Beauteous, British, and boozh-wah—Pattie had it all.

Except for the ability to have children. Infidelity was a constant irritant, one she usually dealt with stoically like a nice girl should, but infertility was the real deal-breaker. Her book finally gets down to grit in the chapter where Clapton fathers a son upon a lover while still married to Pattie. Anyone who has ever grieved a lost, stillborn, or inconceivable child will feel for her at this, the nadir of her existence on the planet. And her belated realization that she ought to never have let herself be seduced away from sour, dour George only darkens the tragic postlude.

Another celebrity memoir—who cares? High-minded persons have no interest in such guilty pleasures, right? Except, as Tom Carson noted recently, a book is either a pleasure or it's not, and reading Shakespeare won't hasten the cure for cancer any more than will reading Dan Brown. In *Trash Culture*, Richard Keller Simon even argues that modern pulp fiction, supermarket tabloids, heaving-bosom women's magazines, TV sitcoms, and the like are just contemporary versions of Homer, Euripides, Spenser, Swift and Flaubert:

The suffering and fall of the ancient nobility is now the suffering and fall of aging movie stars, and although

they do not speak in the same dramatic language, they suffer and fall, and even learn about themselves, in much the same fashion.

But back to essentials. Could there ever be another Beatles? Another band that seems to effortlessly evolve the soundtrack of your life, beat-driven and lyrical at once, with no two songs alike, so branded that it's hard to even imagine cover versions? The answer seems a solid no, for several reasons.

First, the music industry is running scared before a fickle, attention-deficient audience that revels in tearing down its idols after one brief season of adulation. (Paris Hilton, asked by paparazzi why she was leaving a party so soon mumbles, "Yeah ... it was fun ... I'm over it.") Instead of nurturing and developing their artists, industry moguls behave like corporate CFOs fixated on maximizing quarterly earnings while killing the company.

Second, there is the cult of Cool—one thing that the Beatles—for all their hipness and avant-garde, cutting-edge with-itry—never were. They wore their hearts on their (record) sleeves. They said that All You Need Is Love. Cool, by contrast, exudes detachment, distance, mockery, jaded cynicism, irony, inertia, remoteness, unresponsiveness, self-absorption, lack of feeling, disinterest, disengagement—love's opposite. Cool is a deadly virus that continues to insinuate itself into our DNA.

Third, there's too much product now, and it's too easy to produce. There is no quality control. The filters are all gone, replaced by niche markets. Talented artists require equally talented Svengalis, like Brian Epstein and George Martin, to edit and believe in them.

I'm glad my generation had our Beatlemania. "And in the end, the love you take / Is equal to the love you make"—is there any sentiment more beautiful, more simple and more true? ■

Marian Kester Coombs writes from Crofton, Md.

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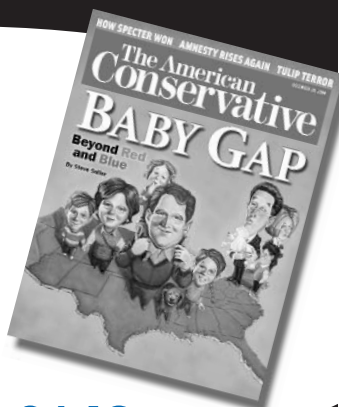
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[*I Am America (And So Can You!)*, Stephen Colbert, Grand Central, 240 pages]

The Truthiness Shall Set You Free

By A.G. Gancarski

STEPHEN COLBERT hosted, at least until the advent of the current Hollywood writers' strike, the popular and critically acclaimed Comedy Central mainstay "The Colbert Report," where he has proven to be one of the sharpest critics of the American Right, not through levying Huffington Post-level criticisms but by presenting a satirical persona that is like nothing so much as Bill O'Reilly as rendered by Jonathan Swift. Very quickly, his program became more of a "must see" than the program that spawned it—Jon Stewart's "Daily Show." And like Stewart, who had a hit book a few years back, Colbert has parlayed his small-screen success into an unignorable book tour.

It found him announcing a run for president (since aborted for reasons well documented elsewhere) and making the media rounds, which included, somewhat surprisingly, an appearance on "Meet the Press." But his interview with Tim Russert revealed the limits of the Colbert gimmick. In answering the host's quasi-serious questions, a low-key and seemingly overwhelmed Colbert unwittingly established that the outsized satirical voice that plays so well in the slot between "The Daily Show" and "The Sarah Silverman Program" doesn't go over so well without a compliant studio audience.

Colbert's "Meet The Press" appearance was unprecedented for a working comedian, but he isn't the first to simultaneously tease a run for president and release a book. In 1940, as FDR maintained his stranglehold on the executive branch, comedienne Gracie Allen ran as

the ersatz insurgent candidate of the Surprise Party and released *Gracie Allen For President*, a book spelling out her stances on the issues of the day. But unlike Colbert, Allen followed through with a campaign that included a nominating convention in Omaha and garnered some actual votes in the 1940 election.

On the federal budget, Allen had this eminently useful advice: "I think people are making altogether too much fuss about money and the budget. Why don't we just buy what we need on the installment plan? A few dollars down, a few dollars a month, and before you know it the battleship is ours." Ably assisted by the crack staff of writers for the Burns and Allen radio program, she had these words of wisdom, undoubtedly taken to heart by President Bush in the last decade: "Don't try to impress your audience. Act like you don't know what you're talking about, then they won't think you're too smart for them. Fumble for a word once in a while; the audience will yell it up to you, and will thus have the thrill of being in on things."

JOKES THAT WOULD GO OVER WONDERFULLY IN FRONT OF A LIVE AUDIENCE
FALL AS **FLAT AS LAST NIGHT'S PABST** ON THE PAGE.

Now comes another performer who, like Allen's presidential candidate, walks a fine line between offering trenchant, yet funny commentary and keeping it dumbed down enough to let the audience feel like it's in on the joke. On his television program, Colbert has proven more than capable of keeping it real and keeping it funny at the same time. His shtick lampoons the sort of flag-pin conservative who predominated when the Iraq War was still a popular cakewalk, and along with the show that spun it off has done as much to expose the hypocrisy underlying certain strains of conservatism as any other cultural output from the Left.

Colbert offers a consistently amusing program. But it's irrepressible verve and insight translate poorly to the written form. Jokes that would go over wonder-

fully in front of a live audience, delivered with that trademark Colbert archness, fall as flat as last night's Pabst on the page. The Colbert persona becomes tiresome very early on in this book, suggesting that his act might be nearing the end of its useful life. At the very least, the printed Colbert provides evidence that the secret to a successful joke is in its delivery.

Part of the problem with *I Am America* is made obvious in the acknowledgements page. Counting Colbert, the book is "written and edited" by a total of 14 people—a staggering sum that made me wonder if each gag in the book was picked by quorum. If nothing else, it makes it clear that Stephen Colbert, the TV character, is to a large degree a creation of his writers, who ironically walked out on the same day he abandoned his short-lived White House bid.

The material seems more than familiar to this longtime "Colbert Report" viewer—as if the production team was more interested in distilling the essence

of the Colbert gimmick than in putting forth interesting new material. The result is the kind of "humor" book people will give acquaintances for Christmas, but not one many people will complete, much less enjoy completing. Much like Colbert's candidacy that never was, this book apparently was a better idea in theory than in practice.

The volume is split into three major sections: "My American Childhood," "My American Adolescence," and "My American Maturity." These pompous section titles signal the quasi-hagiographical function of the book. The Colbert character, obviously, is predicated on successfully projecting a parodic version of the hyperegotism of the O'Reil-lies and Limbaughs of the world. This would have been great, had it actually been funny. But too often in this book,

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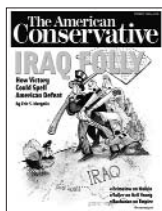
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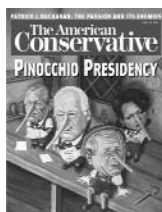


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Colbert eschews the sort of incisive observations that characterized the Allen book for willfully watered-down surrealism in the vein of "I deliver my truth hot and hard. Fast and Furious. Think you can handle it? Baby carrots are trying to turn me gay."

With so much on the Right begging to be satirized in the most eviscerating fashion possible, it's dismaying that Colbert's writing team played for the obvious LOL joke rather than consistently going deeper with the satire and farther with the humor. Colbert is no Lenny Bruce though. He's a Viacom employee, a creation of a creation of mass media, and the ultimate shallowness of this book is testament to exactly how far Comedy Central's latest hype job will be allowed to go. Despite Colbert's obvious appeal to the college-aged stoner set, he essentially is an agent of the status quo. While he skewers straw-man, Fox News Channel "conservative" positions, his critique advances nothing more complex than keeping things as they are.

A good example of this tendency, hinted at in the "baby carrots" quote, is the book's treatment of gay rights. The Colbert character is legendarily intolerant of the so-called "homosexual agenda," which he describes as "nothing more than appeasement. They are sexual Neville Chamberlains. They want us to lay down our arms and pick up rainbow-colored white flags. But we can't let them win our hearts and minds with their thighs and abs. We must crush them."

Even inside the social-conservative movement, there are very few people who would talk like this, at least in public, while arguing against same-sex unions or gay adoption. But the point of "The Colbert Report" isn't to provide a necessarily accurate portrayal of a conservative commentator. Rather, it's to expose this worn-out Hannitized commentary for the fraud that it is and therefore discredit the political coalition that has benefited from the promulgation of a dumbed-down conservative ethos. On television, Colbert accomplishes this with an almost preternatural aplomb; it is very likely that in that realm, the anti-

gay material would have worked—or did work, assuming it's just lifted from an old television script. But in the book, the words call attention to the two-dimensionality and limited shelf-life of the whole spiel.

As is typical of many so-called conservative books in the last decade, Colbert's *I Am America* maintains the same fever-pitch tone throughout. But even as obvious parody, the tone is detrimental to the comic impact. Once the thrill wears off from reading these rapid fire, hit-or-miss riffs on one subject or another, there isn't much left for the reader to grab onto. And after a while, it all runs together—a mishmash of corporatized "edgy" humor.

Those criticisms aside, a few bits flourish in spite of the mixed success of Colbert humor's transition to the printed page. Perhaps it's just this reviewer's visceral aversion to Mitt Romney coming through, but I couldn't help but laugh out loud at Colbert's writers' take on Mormonism: "I'll give the Mormons this. They know which way the wind blows. When America decided that polygamy wasn't the way to go, the Mormons changed their ways and banned it. They had similar changes in policy when public opinion turned against the traditions of massacring pioneers and believing that all black people are evil. Pretty much whenever the general public decides that Mormons are a sinful, crazy cult, their Leader receives a message from God that makes everything OK."

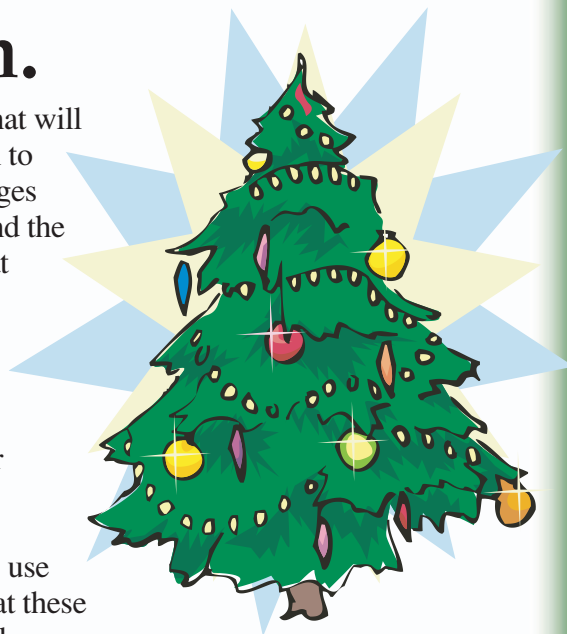
The acerbic quality of the prose here, at least for a moment, is Menckenesque. Such moments, in which the material benefits from being read silently from the page, however, are few and far between. This book is worth owning for those diehard Colbert fans who for some reason need to have his show in hardbound form. But most readers, might as well wait until the book hits the remainder table—or, better still, catch Colbert in his proper context, on cable late at night. ■

A.G. Gancarski writes from Jacksonville, Fla.

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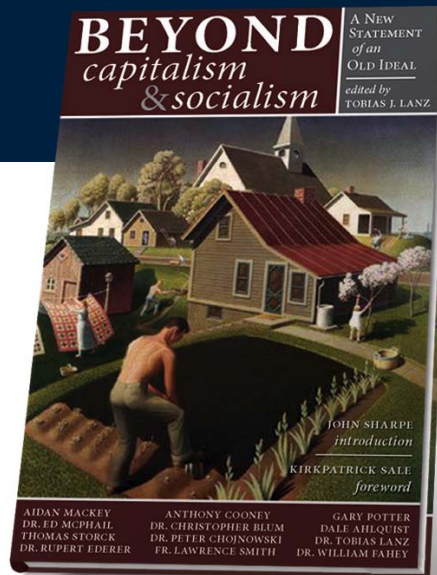
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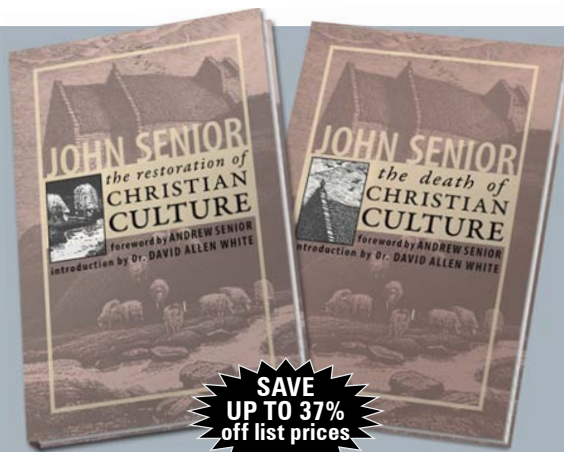
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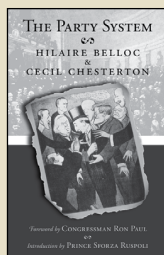
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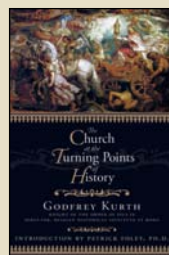


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